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Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions

Edited by

Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg

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Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions

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VOLUME FOREWORD

In an era in which politicians speak about the failure or the success of the multicultural society, or in which some predict a clash of cultures, the question as to how different cultures, and more specifically, different religions can enter into a mutual discussion is of eminent importance. Not only fundamentalists claim that this discussion is impossible. In the highly influential *Political Liberalism*, John Rawls too implies that the discussion between religions (insofar as they belong to different *comprehensive doctrines* of the good) cannot be based on reasonable argumentation. Against this background, Hegel's philosophy of religion enjoys not only a historical importance. Hegel argues that human beings express their freedom *through* religion. To whichever religion they may belong, they have already transcended the power of nature. Precisely this freedom principally enables rational discussion between religions.

This is the first collection in the English language in which all the forms of religion are discussed that are distinguished in Hegel's philosophical system. The articles are written by the best experts of the Dutch and Flemish universities. This makes that this book fulfills an important condition for the possibility to enrich the actual debate between religions through the Hegelian point of view and to explore the opportunities for reasonable discussion between them.

Paul Cobben,
Tilburg University, The Netherlands

FREQUENTLY CITED WORKS AND ABBREVIATIONS

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Part 1, *Einleitung. Der Begriff der Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner 1993 (quoted as L1).

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Part 2, *Die bestimmte Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner 1994 (quoted as L2).

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, Part 3, *Die vollendete Religion*, ed. W. Jaeschke, Hamburg: Meiner 1995 (quoted as L3).

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, in: *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (17 Vols.), Vols. 3–5, ed. W. Jaeschke, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1983 ff.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 1, *Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley: University of California Press 2007 (quoted as L1).

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 2, *Determinate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley: University of California Press 2007 (quoted as L2).

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Vol. 3, *The Consummate Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, Berkeley: University of California Press 2007 (quoted as L3).

Hodgson's edition of Lectures contains the pagination of the German edition in the margins. This present Volume refers to both editions. The first number refers to the English translation; the second number, after the slash, refers to the original German edition [L1 24, Hodgson/Jaeschke].

G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, One Volume Edition, Peter C. Hodgson (ed.), Berkeley: University of California Press 1988.

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G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, eds. K.H. Ilting, K. Brehmer, Hoo Nam Selman, in: *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte* (17 Vols.), Vol. 12, Hamburg: Meiner 1996. [quoted as *Vorl. 12*].

G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, transl. A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1977 [quoted as PhSp].

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Bart Labuschagne and Timo Slootweg

1. Introduction

All during his lifetime, religion has been a principal subject of interest and study for G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831). He wrote a lot on it, starting with some unpublished texts stemming from his Bern period (1793–1796), for example the *Fragments on folk religion and Christianity*, and *The Positivity of the Christian religion*. During his time in Frankfurt (1797–1800), he wrote *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*, a text that became famous only after publication in the 20th Century. In Jena, he devoted an entire chapter to religion; in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) religion is treated as a necessary step in the process of consciousness becoming conscious of itself and of the absolute. In the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (first edition in 1817), religion figures, after art, as a second instance of absolute spirit, right before sublating into philosophy as the third and final shape. These last two publications were the only one Hegel produced during his lifetime on religion as such. But if we take a look at the massive and impressive material from his many lectures on religion, then it is safe to say that he certainly planned to publish much more on this subject, until his sudden death in November 1831 put an end to all plans.

Hegel started relatively late to lecture explicitly on the philosophy of religion, first in the summer semester of 1821, then in 1824, 1827 and finally in 1831.[1] In these days, philosophy of religion was a relatively new subject in academia. Of course, religious philosophical thinking was done within theology, natural theology etc. But the explicit philosophical approach to religion could only take off after the publication of Kant's *Religion within the boundaries of mere reason* (1793/1794). To Hegel, the relation between religion and philosophy was that they both had the

[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, three volumes, edited by Peter C. Hodgson, Oxford: Clarendon Press 2007, translation based on Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, edited by Walter Jaeschke, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1983 ff. Both Jaeschke and Hodgson contributed considerably to the accessibility and understanding of Hegel's philosophy of religion.

same object (truth, also known as God), but that their methods in treating and attaining it differed radically: religion by way of feeling, representation etc. and philosophy through thinking. Therefore, religion can become the subject of philosophical thinking in its own right. Hegel took up this task after having treated almost all other philosophical subjects extensively (such as law, morality, politics and history). Religion remained for the most part untreated; this phenomenon in human life and history needed to be brought to Hegel's mature philosophical and systematical understanding.

In the *Lectures* (1821 ff), Hegel systematically treated not only Christianity, but also all other, major historical religions preceding (and partly concurring with) Christianity: Judaism, Islam, the Roman religion, the Greek, the Egyptian, the Persian, the Chinese, but also Buddhism and Hinduism. Hegel called these great, non-Christian, historical religions: 'determinate religions' (*bestimmte Religionen*). To establish accurately the place of the determinate religions in Hegel's philosophy of religion as a whole, we want to introduce his thoughts somewhat further by focusing (in short) on what he says about this subject in the context of (1) the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and (2) in the context of the *Lectures*. The context of the *Lectures* is that of his Philosophy, and will be discussed below. In contrast to this, the *Phenomenology* comprises the science of the experience of consciousness with itself. A concise reference to this alternative, phenomenological approach, and its connection with the Philosophy, can be of help to a better understanding of Hegel's perception of religion, and of the meaning of his account of the many historical religions.

2. Religion in the Phenomenology of Spirit

Although consciousness is essentially one, it is nevertheless split into that of the world and that of itself. At first the subject acknowledges nothing but its object. Out of this primary stage, a consciousness of self develops, although the subject is unable to conceive of the unity of world and man. Self-consciousness develops gradually in relation to the object and the knowledge thereof. The phenomenology of the object reflects that of the subject, although there is no absolute conscious and reasonable recognition thereof. Nevertheless the subject 'feels' this unity already, and it anticipates this oneness. The phenomenology of experience follows the development of this mere 'feeling anticipation' towards the form of knowledge in which this truth is finally consummated. "Reason is the con-

scious certainty of being all reality."[2] Hegel's method is modesty. The philosopher merely witnesses and describes the experiences of the subject, and the way they follow one another from stage to stage. The one thing he ads to this development is the consciousness thereof, and the knowledge he lends to it.

Consciousness becomes aware of itself and transforms itself into self-consciousness. But before this self-consciousness is completely 'at home with itself', it first passes through many a stage of experience. Through his consciousness man is not only split of (*Entzweit*) from the world of *things*. The divisiveness is also inter-subjective, between the subject and another self, and between the individual and the general or universal. Morality witnesses this divisiveness. History is the process in which this separation and this estrangement (*Entfremdung*) is conquered. In the end, self-consciousness attains full satisfaction only in someone else's self-consciousness, until finally it reaches the consciousness of 'itself as another'. It is only by recognizing others and by being recognized by others that we can reach the final goal of integration and wholeness that is the purpose of mankind. The *summa summarum* of this development is the knowledge, the absolute science of the unity of one's (self)consciousness with the Absolute Self which is God; it is only in the knowing and scientific reconciliation between God and man that the absolute unrest (*die Absolute Unruhe*) of the experience of consciousness comes to rest. Religion is the truth of morality; it is of the essence of morality itself to 'move' and develop in the direction of religion. Religion 'senses' the reconciliation of law (duty) and nature, conscience and reality. The realization of freedom and forgiveness (mercy) is the revelation of God in the world, here and now, and in-between its peoples.[3]

It is however, not just any (arbitrary) religion that suffices to represent this truth of morality. It is only the true religion, Christianity—'the religion of truth'—that is able to accomplish this task. Of this final reconciliation of man with himself (with mankind), man at first experiences a mere *Vorstellung*; a relation of feeling, a pictorial representation of an otherworldly Being. To this supreme object man relates not in a reasonable way, but through devotion (*Andacht*). This strange and otherworldly Being is the object of his hope and his longing. But here on earth these can never

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[2] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Ed. Bonsiepen und Heede, Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag 1988, V, p. 158.

[3] Cf. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, p. 442.

be satisfied, and they remain without realization and fulfillment until the Kingdom of God. Reconciliation remains but a dream for this 'unhappy consciousness'. At the same time however, already this 'dreamed of' reconciliation refers to and encompasses the negation of God as a merely transcendental 'beyond'; as a mere bad infinity (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*). The figure of Christ inspires consciousness towards a 'religion of reason' (*Vernunftreligion*); a religion that transcends the dualism of Christianity in the 'positive' sense, and within the 'philosophy of faith' (Jacobi's *Glaubensphilosophie*). Just like the phenomenon of Law and State can only be understood in a proper philosophical way (they are the general organism and the ethical commonwealth in which the moral subject is embedded and finds its freedom), religion also must be known through the Science of the Absolute, that reveals itself as the spirit of the world.

Philosophical consciousness is the product of the phenomenology of religion that finds its fulfillment in the scientific 'appreciation' of the religion of truth. However, before the highest, 'revealed religion' steps upon the stage, religion itself has gone through a long and many-faceted development. A religious consciousness accompanies every stage in the phenomenology of the spirit. But in respect to the fulfillment of history, religion has a particularly important role to play. In the *Phenomenology* Hegel writes about it in the chapter called: 'Die Religion', where he discriminates between three groups and three kinds of worship: the natural, aesthetic and revealed religions. Religion develops in accordance to the form of its object, the Absolute. Natural religion reveres God in natural objects. The first moment of this stage is, 'the religion of light'; the God of light makes itself seen in the surrounding darkness. Later on, plants and animals are also included in the divinization of nature that finds its result in the imagination of the 'master artificer' (*Werkmeister*). Aesthetic religion makes works of art, man transfigured by poetic imagination, the object of worship. Classical Greece and its devotion to the divine, pictured in human forms and frozen statues, is the famous example that Hegel has in mind, as well as the spiritual art of epos, that shows the life of the hero and the fate of his people in close relationship to the whims of the Gods. Revealed religion (*offenbare Religion*), that is Christianity, rises to the level of revealing the Absolute Spirit; although in some sense it is still veiled and indirect. Its idea is the 'conjunction' of the individual and the absolute spirit; the eternal and the temporal; the divine and the human. That the Supreme Being is heard, and seen as an objective and very 'real' self-consciousness, this revelation is the culmination and consummation of concept of God. This revelation means 'salvation'. To die is the fate

of mankind. In Christianity however, God participates in this 'privilege'. God becomes man, and dies like a man. The divine God becomes mortal; mortality is conquered spiritually; the finite becomes eternal in respect to its spirituality.

Religion is imagination and perception; it is the truth in its content, but not qua form (it is not in conformity to the medium of the concept). There is however, a spiritual kinship of faith and knowledge. Only speculative reflection fully 'reveals' the truth of religion, the truth of morality. This even higher form of self-consciousness (*Absolute Wissenschaft*) is reached on the basis of a *divine* life of self-sacrifice, self-alienation and self-reconciliation. The (example of the) death of God as an abstract individual, the development of ethical consciousness, is the spiritual 'Resurrection of God' in the spirit of the community and the State. In addition to this, the *Phenomenology* is the becoming of science (*das reale Wissen*). Only he can save himself, who 'loses himself'; this 'abstraction' is necessary to be able think in a proper, philosophical way. Man becomes himself once he loses himself as an abstract individual, not only in respect to the higher ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) to which he belongs, but also in respect to the higher scientific, logical and ontological consciousness thereof.

Eventually it is only by philosophically 'thinking through' the truths of Christianity as a revealed religion, for instance by analyzing the dogma of the Holy Trinity, that the enlightened, integrated consciousness (*das absolute Wissen*) can break through. The development of the philosophical consciousness is the highest stage of the phenomenology of the experience of the personal subject (*Ich*). Its highest object (*Gegenstand*), the Absolute is understood as 'Spirit being conscious of itself, mediated by the consciousness of the subject'. Therefore, the final stage of the road to Science comprises the beginning of the Logic that focuses on the development of the Absolute in itself. The metaphysics of the Absolute object becoming conscious of itself is implicated in the Concept (*Begriff*) of religion. The development (in itself) of this Absolute Concept, the becoming conscious of itself thereof, is the 'real', ontological process (the *Real Philosophie*) behind the phenomenology of the consciousness of the subject. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* culminates in this real process; it wants to elevate consciousness towards this Real Philosophy of the development of the Concept. Christian religion is the religion of spirit; not just of the human spirit, but of God's spirit as well. This is, in fact where the more extensive *Lectures* (1821 ff) fit in. The *Lectures* also include a (more extensive) treatment of the historical religions, but the context in which they appear is thoroughly different from that of the Phenomenology.

3. Determinate Religion in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion

There are several ways in which the difference between the treatment of religion in the *Phenomenology* and the *Lectures* can be characterized. One way is to see the *Phenomenology* as a 'bottom up' treatment of the subject and the *Lectures* as a 'top down' approach. Another is that the perspective of the former is taken from the subject itself, while that of the latter from the object: the absolute. Yet another way to characterize this difference, is to say that the *Phenomenology* describes the development of consciousness as it enfolds within subjective consciousness itself, as its (*für es*) development and *Bildung* towards true knowledge and philosophy on the one hand, while the *Lectures* (on the other hand) contain a *realphilosophische* exposition of the subject as it is in and for itself; as well as 'for us' (*für uns*), as already initiated philosophers. Let us now take a closer look at the overall structure of the *Lectures*, and try to elucidate what the place is of the historical religions in this greater scheme.

As already stated, the three parts of which the *Lectures* are organized according to Hegel's idea of the Concept, as laid down (mainly) in the Science of Logic (*Wissenschaft der Logik*, 3 Vols. 1812/1813/1816) and the Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences (*Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, 1e ed. 1817, 2 ed. 1827, 3 ed. 1830). According to Hegel, the gap between subject and object and between epistemology and metaphysics can and needs to be bridged. The task of philosophy in general and the Logic in particular is to show that there is an inherent connection between thought and reality, and that reality is reasonable in itself and that reason is something real.[4] The various domains of human thought and experience, including religion, ethics, morality, politics, law and history, show an intrinsic 'deep structure' which can be brought to philosophical understanding by the categorical scheme of Hegel's Logic.[5] Not only does it make the claim to ground theoretical knowledge (reflection on the conditions of the possibility for empirical knowledge) and practical knowledge (reflection on the conditions of the possibility for moral-practical action), but also to interrelate the theoretical and the practical

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[4] See the preface to the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, (1821) Werke Band 7, edited by Eva Moldenhauer en Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag 1970, 1986, p. 24: "Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig."

[5] Peter C. Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', in: G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, one-volume edition, The Lectures of 1827, edited by Peter C. Hodgson, Oxford: Clarendon Press 2006, p. 11.

in ways that Kant failed to do. The method by which Hegel proceeds, is by reflecting on reflection itself: this is what Hegel call 'speculative thought', in order to distinguish this thought from the merely 'reflective' philosophy of Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers. This speculative philosophy not only grounds ethical, aesthetical, legal and historical experience, but also religious experience, man's experience of God. Hegel's God is not a supersensible entity, but rather the *ultimate* condition of the possibility for the *totality* of experience and for religious experience in particular. In this sense, the philosophical first principle and the theological first principle are one and the same: God *is* the absolute idea. This is not to say, however, that God is not actual (*wirklich*). God is actual, actual being in and for itself, but only in and through worldly reality, not as a separated, supersensible entity. When taken apart from the world, God's actuality remains abstract, unfulfilled, unrealized. In and through the world, of which God is the condition *par excellence* of its possibility, God becomes a concrete, living, true actuality—that is: absolute spirit.[6] And what we can come to terms with, is the way in which God has worked through human history and in the history of religions, in order to manifest himself finally in the consummate religion.

The deep, logical structure, that is grounded in the dialectic of speculative thought, consists of three moments or figures, and can be described as follows: (1) universality (*Allgemeinheit*), which is the most universal substance or principle of a statement that can be discerned. This substance or principle is taken as such, *an sich*, in its most general and universal being. (2) Particularity (*Besonderheid*), the particular quality, determinate modification or application of the universal in the case at hand, which can be seen here for itself, *für sich*. We take it as something particular, separate, as something being on its own, in its own right, but as a concrete manifestation and particularization of the general substance. (3) Individuality or singularity (*Einzelheit*), where the former two come together in an adequate shape, wherein the universal is realized and embodied in an absolute way, that is: *an und für sich*. The realization or embodiment is something that is adequate to its concept, wherein the concept finds its most perfect expression and can be regarded as being with itself or at home with itself in its otherness. This very triadic (or maybe: trinitarian) structure is mirrored in every aspect of Hegel's philosophical system. In the system as a whole (logical idea, nature, spirit), in the science of logic

[6] Hodgson, op. cit. p. 12.

(being / immediacy, essence / reflection, concept / subjectivity) and its subdivisions; the dialectics of consciousness (immediacy, differentiation, return; or identity, cleavage, reunification); and for example even in the doctrine of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

The threefold division of the philosophy of religion in the *Lectures* reflects this logical structure as well (1. Concept of Religion, 2. Determinate Religion, 3. Consummate Religion), as do the subdivisions of each of these main parts.[7] The first part is concerned with the concept of religion, that is: with religion in its most general and universal aspects: as it is *an sich*. Abstraction is made of what particular form of religion whatsoever, and attention is focused only on the most general and universal characteristics of the religious phenomenon. Themes such as the 'abstract' concept of God, the knowledge of God (the 'theoretical' relationship) and the cultus (the 'practical' relationship) are discussed. We will dwell on this first part of the *Lectures* below. The second part deals with the realisation, the actual being of religion: the determinate religions. These are the religions that are dealt with in the volume that the reader has in hand now: the actual, historical religions that humankind has developed and known, and of which Hegel takes deep and serious account in the second part of his lectures. He treats (what he calls) immediate religion, or Nature religion, the Religion of Magic, Buddhism, Hindu Religion, Persian Religion, Egyptian Religion, the Religion of the Greeks, the Religion of the Jews and finally the Roman Religion. The lectures exhibit a great variety in categorization and labelling of these religions, which shows that Hegel had difficulties with allotting them a proper place in his system. And the Third part is devoted to the culmination of all the previous religion in the religion that is alone adequate to the concept of God: the consummate religion—that is revealed religion: Christianity.

The first part of the *Lectures* is titled *The Concept of Religion*. It may be useful to expound the content of this part a little more, so that the reader, when studying the contributions on the several determinate religions in this volume, can understand in what way these determinate religions form a particularization of, or embody the concept into concrete, historical religions.[8] Hegel starts with an exposition of the abstract (and not yet concrete) realization of the concept in its three constitutive, inner, logical

[7] Hodgson, op. cit. p. 13.

[8] For the sake of clarity and brevity, the one-volume edition of the Lectures of 1827, edited by Peter C. Hodgson, op. cit. is used, especially the excellent Editorial Introduction, pp. 27–39.

moments: (1) the 'abstract' concept of God, (2) the knowledge of God (the 'theoretical' religious relationship), and (3) the cultus (the 'practical' religious relationship). These three moments correspond with the moments of the self-explication of the idea of God itself. In this first sphere of sheer immediacy and universality, the first thing that can and should be said, is that God is of course the absolute truth and that religion alone is the absolutely true knowledge. This content that stands at the beginning of the philosophy of religion, however, appears to be at the same time the result of the whole of philosophy. The three major disciplines of philosophy (logic, nature and spirit) lead up to God as their final result. Philosophy of religion is at once the final science within the philosophical system, presupposing all the other branches, starting from the (already in the *Phenomenology* obvious) premise, that man is a *homo religiosus*. Since this 'result' (and premise) is the absolute truth, it cannot be merely a result or just a premise. It must also be a philosophical presupposition, the first one, as well as the last one, that which results from itself. As such, God is the absolute substance, yet at the same time (in order to avoid the charge of pantheism or Spinozism) subject: God is being-with-itself and abiding-with-itself, in other words, God is spirit, absolute spirit. And we have this content in thought, not yet primarily in feeling, willing, imagination etc. Human beings think, and they alone have religion. Thus religion has its inmost seat in thought, though no doubt it can also be felt, believed, imagined, represented, and practiced.[9]

Knowledge of God, in faith, feeling, representation and thought, in short: the theoretical religious relationship, is dealt with in the second section.[10] In it, a large body of material treating the various forms of religious consciousness is incorporated, such as immediate knowledge, faith, feeling, representation, thought etc. This theme of religious knowledge corresponds to the second, logical moment of religion, that is differentiation, distinction and concrete embodiment, which form the preconditions of relationship. This relationship can be seen from the point of God and from the view of consciousness. The God who can be known and represented in the world, is a concrete, differentiated and self-manifesting subject. He is no longer an abstract, self-identical, universal substance. He enters into a relationship with man by manifesting himself in history.

[9] Hodgson, op. cit. pp. 27–28. Hegel's treatment of this section can be found on the pages 114–128.

[10] Hegel, *Lectures*, op. cit. pp. 128–189.

From the point of view of man's consciousness, a number of different forms of religious consciousness can be discerned. The first one is that of *immediate knowledge*—that is: the immediate certainty (*Gewissheit*) that God *is*, and that God indeed is this universality having being in and for itself, outside of me and independent of me. Certainty is the most immediate relation between this content and myself. And the first and most basic form of this certainty is that of *faith* (*Glaube*), which can and should not be placed in opposition to knowledge (*Wissen*) but is in fact a form of knowledge in its own right. Instead of using 'faith', Hegel prefers the term used in his general epistemology, 'intuition' (*Anschauung*), thereby stressing that this form of knowledge is not of a sensible nature—since God is not an object of sense-experience. The second element is 'feeling' (*Gefühl*), which connotes the subjective aspect of the immediate certainty, namely its relevance for our own, particular existence. We have at once the feeling of a content (for example, a hard object) and the feeling of ourselves (the feeling 'hardness'), which we feel that we feel. Feeling is something *fashionable*, says Hegel, because when we feel something, we are personally and subjectively involved with it, thereby attributing value to the thing in question, as well as to ourselves. However, feeling does not make us able to judge the validity of its contents. Feelings of the heart must be purified and cultivated, and this is exactly why 'thought' becomes indispensable. Before reaching 'thought' however, we encounter first the form of knowledge known as 'representation' (*Vorstellung*). If feeling constitutes the subjective aspect, then representation attends to the objective aspect, the content, of whatever it is that we are immediately certain about. Yet it does not penetrate this content in any rational or cognitive way. Representation has two basic forms, or configurations: sensible and non-sensible. The first are considered 'images' (*Bilder*), they are symbolic, allegorical, metaphorical and mythical. Non-sensible configurations (*nichtsinnliche Gestaltungen*) have to do with spiritual contents, activities, relationships.[11]

And finally in this section, 'thought' is treated, in a quite long chapter,[12] where Hegel discusses the relationship of thought and representation and the question whether religious knowledge is immediate or mediated. The point is, that representation apprehends its various contents in their determinate isolation, whereas thought seeks for relationships and universality.

[11] Hodgson, op. cit. pp. 29–32.
[12] Hegel, *Lectures*, op. cit. pp. 151–189.

Thought raises representational configurations to a conceptual form. A concept (*Begriff*) precisely grasps or holds together (*be-greifen*) exactly those elements that remain disparate in the simple placing-before (*vor-stellen*) the mind of various sensible or non-sensible images. By developing arguments and hypotheses that elucidate the unity of representational features, it arrives at a 'conviction' (*Überzeugung*), which is certainty in the form of thought. In a last chapter in this section on the theoretical religious relationship, Hegel discusses the proofs of the existence of God.[13]

The concluding section, *The Cultus*, demonstrates that the theoretical religious relationship is still unaccomplished. In the case of the knowledge of God, I am immersed in my object and know nothing about myself. But actually, the true situation is that I am in a *relationship* with this object; I should know myself as being filled with it. What accomplishes this unity is in fact *action*, that is: the activity of the cultus, which constitutes the practical religious relationship. Cultus is "the including, within my own self, of myself with God, the knowing of myself within God and of God within me."[14] This is accomplished through the act of 'enjoyment', 'partaking', or 'communion' (*Genuss*), which is the cultic act *par excellence*. It does not so much bring about the reconciliation of God with mankind, but it presupposes it, participates in is as something already accomplished by God's grace, either implicitly or explicitly. Hegel distinguishes three basic forms of the cultus. The first one is devotion (*Andacht*), which is "not the mere faith that God is, but is present when the faith becomes vivid, when the subject prays and is occupied with this content not merely in objective fashion but becomes immersed therein."[15] Next, there are two external cultic forms, sacraments on the one hand (reconciliation brought into feeling, into present sensible consciousness) and sacrifice on the other (the negation involved in elevation sensibly accomplished). The third and highest form is repentance, whereby one not only renounces external things but also offers one's heart or innermost self to God. When purity of heart is properly cultivated, it results in ethical life, which is according to Hegel "the most genuine cultus."[16] Actually, social and political ethics represent an extension and further realization of the religious cultus,

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[13] For an analysis of this, see Hodgson op. cit. pp. 34–38. Discussion here would take us too far from the purpose of this introduction.

[14] Hegel, *Lectures*, op. cit. p. 191.

[15] Hegel, *Lectures*, op. cit. p. 193.

[16] Hegel, *Lectures*, op. cit. p. 194. Hodgson, op. cit. p. 39.

something which is treated by Hegel only at the end the lectures, in his treatment of the Christian cultus.

The treatment of the cultus constitutes the final section of the first part of the *Lectures*. According to the logic of the Concept, it is now time to develop the concept in the dimension of its particularity, that is: to show how the concept is embodied in concrete, actual and historical religions. These concrete manifestations of religion in the determinate religions are considered to be not yet fully adequate in relation to its concept. In the second part of his *Lectures*, Hegel discusses extensively practically all known major world religions, whereby he distinguishes between the determinate religions (all non-Christian religions) and the consummate, revealed religion (Christianity, in both its Catholic and Protestant varieties).

4. Purpose of the Book

The present volume brings together a collection of critical essays that discuss Hegel's relation to each of these determinate, historical forms of religion; including the consummate, revealed religion of Christianity. A discussion of Islam is also included, although it does not figure prominently among Hegel's determinate religions. All contributions aim to shed light on the intriguing development of Hegel's conception of the history of these actual religions. They not only offer a text-immanent analytical approach, but they also take a (more or less) critical stance in which Hegel's perception is confronted with a critique developed from the (point of view of the) religion in question. Moreover, important to observe here, is that the determinate religions are considered by Hegel to be less perfect religions; religious forms that are less adequate to the concept of religion. Only Christianity turns out to be in this sense a true religion. However, seen from these religions themselves, truth is involved as well; of course, at least for the believers in question. This poses (undeniably) a deep tension between the self-understanding of these non-Christian believers and how they view their religion (namely: as true religion) and Hegel's understanding of these religions as less true than Christianity.

It has been our aim not only to develop a comprehensive view of Hegel's philosophy of the historical religions, but also of its broader, contemporary importance. We did not want to bundle separate, stand-alone contributions, but to offer an integral outline of Hegel's philosophy of the *religions* in general. The construction and structure of the book follow (for

the most part) the dialectics that Hegel himself employed in his *Lectures*, with the exception of Islam that Hegel finds difficult to rubricate.

Apart from text-immanent exegesis and the critical appraisal, the further aim of this book is as indicated, to contribute to the discussion between (on the one hand) Hegel's daring, far-reaching philosophical treatment of the great historical religions, and (on the other hand) the current approach, prevailing in religious studies, that seems to be constrained (more and more) to the merely empirical appreciation of the religious material. We could say that, in some sense, Hegel himself has been responsible for this self-imposed restriction. After his death, Hegel's philosophy of religion was severely criticized. It was presumed to be too speculative and too little empirical in order to be able to do justice to the actual, historical religions. For many scholars 19th Century Hegelianism constituted a reason to withdraw and distance themselves from philosophy, and to a retreat into a non-reflexive religiosity and a mere descriptive science thereof. Neo-Kantianism succeeded more or less in regaining some of the long lost trustworthiness of the idealistic approach. But there still remained a great deal of suspicion towards philosophy.

On the other hand, one might ask the question whether empiricism does not condemn itself to intellectual blindness. Philosophers in general and Hegel in particular, have been reproached many times (and not always without reason) for their generalisations and idealisations. However, positive empiricist science can be blamed for a lack of syntheses, for remaining steeped in details and for over-accentuating the many nuances of reality. While society nowadays is in deep search for these broader perspectives and meanings, their analyses tenaciously refrain and 'abstract' completely from taking a critical, philosophical or normative stance.

In our view Hegel's philosophy of religion can serve as an example in (at least) two ways. Surely, 'Hegel' serves as a warning against the (sometimes) presumptuous pretentions of philosophy to be able to understand in a nutshell, just about everything. However in addition to this, Hegel could serve as an example for those who do not want to restrict themselves to the empirical approach of the contemporary 'religious studies', but who want seriously to engage, with all possible dangers, in thinking about God, and about the relation between God and man.

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RELIGION OF NATURE

Heinz Kimmerle

1. Introduction

In his *Lectures on the philosophy of religion* (1821), Hegel departs from the idea of a 'religion of spirit', which has the same content as his philosophy, that is: a 'philosophy of spirit'. In this context, he cannot give an adequate explanation of the 'religion of nature'. Especially he cannot do justice to the African form of a 'religion of nature'. In his writings of 1800–1802 he defends a 'religion of life', which corresponds to the central meaning of the concepts of life and nature in his 'system of philosophy' of that time. This forms a more adequate presupposition to explain the 'religion of nature'. Although there is no direct relation possible between Hegel's 'religion of life' and the animist religious representations and practices in sub-Saharan African tradition, the outlines of a philosophical discussion is sketched in the following contribution, in which this relation becomes meaningful.

'Philosophy of Spirit' and 'Religion of Spirit'

'God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth'; 'this same Spirit testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children'. These two quotations from the New Testament (John 4; 24 and Romans 8; 16) are the key-texts upon which Hegel's 'philosophy of religion' is founded. This is especially true with regard to the claim that Christianity is the highest form of religion. Philosophy, as it is worked out as the last stage of Hegel's 'system of philosophy', has the same contents as this religion. His 'system of philosophy' is *philosophy of spirit* in all its parts: in the 'Science of Logic', spirit is presented as idea, in the 'Philosophy of Nature', spirit exists as its other and in the 'Philosophy of Spirit', we encounter spirit as spirit. According to Hegel—and he uses among other arguments the two above given quotations for that—the Christian religion is *religion of spirit*, which is testified both by God's Spirit and by our human spirit. Therefore the dispute whether (Christian) religion is

sublated and thus surpassed by philosophy or not, is of no use.[1] Both of them express the 'Absolute spirit', and that means the absolute truth, in an adequate way: religion in the medium of representations and philosophy in the medium of concepts.

Of course, philosophy is paramount to religion, but religion is broader than philosophy. Religion enables the absolute truth to become accessible to people who are not familiar with philosophical thought and the language of concepts. In addition, philosophy, if it is true philosophy—that means: self-development of spirit (Hegel speaks in this connection of 'speculative' philosophy)—is in itself religious. The self-development of spirit covers the following stages: first of all, it knows itself, in a next step it observes itself in nature, then it puts its elements beside and opposite to each other by means of reflection, and finally it unites them in the wholeness of perceiving itself. Moreover, this happens also, in a way, which is accessible for everybody, in religion and its history. Therefore is 'religion . . . the truth *for all human beings*'.[2]

Systematic Explanation and History of Religion

These elements of true religion are present in the 'revealed religion' of Christianity as absolute religion. For this religion is a 'religion of spirit'. This can be summarized, with Hegel, also in a more religious language: (1) 'God is only God insofar as He knows Himself'; (2) 'His knowledge of Himself is also a self-consciousness in the human being' who is aware of the outside nature and perceives himself as spirit. Thus self-consciousness is reached, in which knowledge is attained that the finite human being has *of* God, how imperfect that may be. (3) The human knowledge of God transforms itself finally into 'the self-knowledge of the human being *within* God'.[3] In the *Encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences* these three elements of true religion are explained systematically. These will be left aside

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[1] Karl Löwith, 'Hegels Aufhebung der christlichen Religion', in: Hans-Georg Gadamer (ed.), *Heidelberger Hegel-Tage 1962*, Bonn: Bouvier 1964, pp. 193–236; Albert Chapelle, *Hegel et la religion*, Paris: Editions universitaires 1963; Heinz Kimmerle, 'Zur theologischen Hegelinterpretation', in: *Hegel-Studien 3* 1965, pp. 356–369.

[2] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), ed. Friedhelm Nicolin & Otto Pöggeler, Hamburg: Meiner 1959, pp. 451–452 (§573). I am quoting here and in the following text from this German edition and give my own translation. Reference to the paragraphs (§§) makes it possible to find the quotations in any other edition of this work.

[3] Hegel, *Enzyklopdädie*, p. 447 (§564).

in this contribution. However, the systematic steps can also be traced in the history of religion, which Hegel has worked out in his *Lectures on the philosophy of religion*. In this history the finite human knowledge of God presents itself in different forms of 'determinate religion'. The 'religion of nature' is the first of these historical forms.

The 'religion of nature' originates when natural things are observed in a spiritual way in the self-consciousness of the human being. Insofar as this is a *spiritual* observation of natural things, nature is conceived as God. Hegel gives several examples of this religion, namely the religion of the Eskimos, the Mongolians, but first of all, the Africans. The Chinese 'religion of the state' is also part of the 'religion of nature' in certain years when Hegel has given these *Lectures*, but not in all of them.

'Religion of Nature'

For the reading of the main passages of the 'religion of nature', which will follow here, the edition of Jaeschke provides us with the most reliable and most detailed texts.[4] However, I will not just reproduce the contents of these passages or retell them. A deconstructive reading is carried out, which will lead to somehow unexpected and also unaccustomed results. The *general introduction* is especially taken into consideration, as well as the *explanation of the first form* of the 'immediate religion or religion of nature', which is called by Hegel 'religion of sorcery'. In the general introduction and in the first chapter of the first form of the 'religion of nature': 'a) The metaphysical concept' of God, we find the conceptual basis of this form of religion. These passages will be read with precision and some formulations will be examined critically, which deal with the concept of nature and the concept of life. This way of reading will make clear that there are some cracks and clean breaks in Hegel's conception of a 'religion of spirit'. The description of the African form of a 'religion of nature' turns out to be especially inadequate. Earlier conceptions of nature, life and the human world in Hegel's thought would have enabled a different explanation of the 'religion of nature' as a 'religion of life'. In support of this allegation I will—after a short glimpse at the chapter on 'The religion' in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from 1807 and some passages of the

[4] VPhR 2, 1–29, 139–219, 411–445, 611–614. Quotations from this edition are my translation (HK).

Systematic Drafts (Systementwürfe) from 1802/03 until 1806—refer to the systematic conception of the years 1800 to 1802.

Therefore, the later conception of religion as 'religion of spirit' is confronted with a philosophy of religion that departs from the concept of life that is essential for Hegel's 'system of philosophy' as a whole in the years of his transition from Frankfurt to Jena. In this connection one could speak of a 'religion of life' or even of an animistic conception of religion. However, the notion of 'animism', to be used to denote a religion based on the concept of life, is not yet in use in Hegel's time. According to the lemma 'Animism' in the *Encyclopaedia of Ghosts and Spirits*, edited by R.E. Guiley, this notion is introduced by the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book *Religion in Primitive Cultures*, that was published in 1871.[5]

'Religion of Spirit' and 'Religion of Life' in Hegel and Animist Representations in Traditional African Religion

In his *Lectures* from 1821 on, in the context of a 'religion of spirit' Hegel calls the first form of the 'religion of nature', as we have said before: 'religion of sorcery'. On several occasions, he remarks that we cannot speak of religion in a proper sense of the word on this level. A closer examination of the way in which Hegel is using his sources here, especially about traditional African religion and of the whole presentation of this form of religion, leads us to the conclusion that he is hampered by his universal concept of spirit to give an adequate explanation of the 'religion of nature'. Earlier conceptions of his 'system of philosophy', which depart from the concept of life, are quite different in this respect. They are akin to animism as we find it in traditional African religion, if we look at it from the knowledge we have of it today. This religion can be called a 'religion of spirits', because the belief that a soul can be found in all things—also in natural things—means that spirits can dwell in them. In this connection, a new appreciation of animism is necessary in order to correct the devaluation of this religion, which has occurred in the period of Enlightenment and of colonialism. The later Hegel has contributed considerably to the devaluation of this religion. The correction can take place in the context of a philosophical discussion, which takes seriously the 'absent-present' or 'present-absent'—dimension of reality, as it becomes possible since Derrida's suggestion of a new 'spectrology'.

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[5] Edward B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Cultures*, New York/Oxford: Facts on File 1992, pp. 11–13.

2. 'Religion of Nature' in Hegel's 'System of Philosophy' Since 1817

Logical Foundations of the 'Religion of Nature'

The explanation of the history of religion in Hegel's *Lectures on the philosophy of religion* from 1821 on, as it is founded in his *Encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences* (1st edition in 1817), relies more in particular on the first part of this philosophical system: the 'Science of logic'. That means: the 'Religion of nature', corresponding to the first chapter of the 'Logic', consists in the religion of 'Being'. We have to take into consideration that the correspondences between systematic and historical elements with Hegel are generally, and also in this particular context, not very strict. The coincidences that occur in history make this impossible.

In the *General introduction* to the 'Immediate religion or Religion of nature', in the *first paragraph* 'a) The Metaphysical Concept' of God, and in the *first passages of the second paragraph* 'b) The Concrete Representation' of God, Hegel works with the concept of 'Being' of his 'Science of logic'. 'Being' is presented in the 'Logic' as 'immediateness'. The first form of religion therefore is described as 'Immediate religion'. This form of religion is characterised by the 'sensual awareness of God in all things without distinction'. This characterisation seems to amount to pantheism, as it has been worked out in modern philosophy since Descartes by Spinoza. Hegel, however, denies this similarity explicitly. According to his explanation, 'Immediate religion' or 'Religion of nature' is on the 'lowest and most imperfect level' of religion, as can be found with 'wild peoples'. The pantheism of Spinoza is, in opposition to that, the first form of the 'true' philosophy of religion, and is as such the foundation of 'Absolute' or 'Revealed religion'.

At the beginning of the 'Logic' the notion of 'Being' as the first one, also has a double meaning like the first form of the 'true' philosophy of religion in Spinoza. In connection with 'nothingness' and 'becoming', the notion of 'Being' is the foundation of all the following notions of 'pure thought', as they are developed in the 'Logic'. The specific value, which is thus attributed to the 'first' notion, is given also to pantheism as the first form of the 'true' philosophy of religion, but not to the 'Religion of nature' as the first form of all religions.

Notwithstanding this negative appreciation of the 'Immediate religion' or 'Religion of nature', Hegel tries to do justice to it. Although 'Being' is the foundation of the 'religion of nature' only in its restricted meaning, it is nevertheless a spiritual determination, which shows that God is in all natural things. Therefore, Hegel can say: 'God is the being in . . . all finite

things'. When God or the infinite is related in this way to the being of all finite things, this means a first proof of the existence of God. Hegel formulates this proof as a syllogism:

> The finite (of all things) *presupposes* the infinite
> However, the finite *is*.
> Then *is* also the infinite.

Like the way in which the notion of 'Being' is used in the determination of the 'Religion of nature', this proof of the existence of God is also deficient; it is abstract and restricted in its validity. What happens here, is not that God is given 'being', but that 'being' is given God. Individual, finite things are made general by giving them a spiritual meaning. But the idea of God, which is expressed in this statement, is not 'adequate' to a 'more profound' explanation. The 'Religion of nature' as a whole cannot really be regarded as a religion at all, at the most as a 'heathen religion' or—Hegel is using a term of Goethe here—an 'ethnic religion'.

Because Hegel is uncertain about the 'Religion of nature' as a real religion, the German theologian R. Leuze, in his study on 'The non-Christian religions in Hegel's philosophy of religion'—a study which is called a standard work on this subject matter by Jaeschke[6]—, completely leaves out this form of religion. In contrast to what Hegel himself does, Leuze decides, on account of its uncertain status as a religion, not to deal with the 'Religion of nature'. He starts with the religion of the Chinese empire, which comes under the 'Religions of nature' in some years of Hegel's *Lectures*, in others not.[7]

The Concept of Nature in the 'Religion of Spirit'

We have seen, that the sentence: 'There is a sensual awareness of nature . . . as God' may not be understood as an expression of pantheism in the sense of Spinoza. Moreover, 'being' as it is used in the explanation of the 'Religion of nature' is not 'being' in the full, concrete meaning of this notion. Both of these critical statements by Hegel about the 'Religion of nature' can be traced back to the concept of nature in the 'Religion of spirit'. For

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[6] Cf. Walter Jaeschke in: Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*. vol. 4b, Hamburg: Meiner 1985, p. 653.

[7] R. Leuze, *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht 1975, pp. 9–10.

in this concept, nature is restricted to 'fixed', finite things. In the 'religion of nature' as part of the 'religion of spirit', to worship the 'sun . . . stars, river, sea', the 'sky in general' has to do with an 'undetermined consciousness of a mighty being, something mighty, a benevolent spirit'. Such representations miss clear determinations, which in modern pantheism are applied e.g. to the sun. It is thought of as a ball of a certain kind and matter, surrounded by planets, circling around it according to firm rules. In modern pantheism, in contrast to the 'Religion of nature', finite things are therefore made into something general in a determined way.

In a more developed form of the 'Religion of nature', the power of nature is present in *subjective natural beings* in a more intensive way than in *things.* In this connection, *animals* are mentioned; and on an even higher level *human beings*. But no firm ontological status is given to those animals or human beings that can make use of the power of nature. They are 'purely immediate, natural' beings, and as such thought of in an 'inadequate' way. Their generality is only one of representation or will, not of thinking.

Spirit cannot recognise itself adequately in this concept of nature. Because of the undetermined 'dark' character of the power of nature in the 'religion of nature', the mind is filled with fear, with unclear desires and feelings of scare. 'Coincidental and arbitrary connections' are made. Nature is somehow independent, on its own, and ducks out of the universal functions of spirit, which give structure to everything. 'The unity of man and nature', a saying that is often used, is wrong according to Hegel. It should be: the unity of man and 'his nature'. And the nature of man is 'freedom, being spirit'. Due to the presupposed universal determination of all that is by spirit, Hegel cannot understand nature as a meaningful whole in itself in which specific natural things have their determined place. In this conception, the attitude of man is not primarily a receiving one with regard to nature as an independent whole.

3. 'Religion of Nature' in an Earlier Period of Hegel's Writings

The Concepts of Life and Nature in Hegel's Conception of Religion in 1800–1802

It is amazing that in an earlier phase of his thought Hegel defends a concept of nature, which is clearly understood as an independent whole that is on the same level as the human world or even can claim priority with regard to the latter. When he started to build up a 'system of philosophy'

of his own in the years 1800–1802, philosophy of nature methodologically formed the main part of it. The concept of life was the basic concept of this system. The contents and the structure of this system of philosophy is examined in my earlier research and published in my book: *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens. Hegels 'System der Philosophie' in den Jahren 1800 bis 1804*.[8] In the meantime, it is generally recognised that Hegel's systematic drafts of his early Jena period (including some texts of his last year in Frankfurt) have a specific meaning, which is different from his later systematic conceptions.[9] This is also documented in the *Hegel-Lexikon*, which has recently become available.[10]

Traces of Earlier Concepts of Life and of Nature in the Explanation of Religion in the Phenomenology of Spirit *of 1807 and in the* Systematic Drafts *from 1802/03 until 1806*

Before going into details about the concepts of life and nature and their meaning for the explanation of religion in the systematic conception of the years 1800–1802, I will show which traces of these conceptions still can be found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of 1807 and in the *Systematic Drafts* from 1802/03 until 1806. In a certain sense traces like these can also be identified in the later work of Hegel.

The path, which is followed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from certainty on the basis of sense data through all forms of knowledge to the 'certainty of the spirit of itself' finally results in the 'consciousness of the absolute being', which means: the phenomenon of religion. But this way through the forms of knowledge is different from the development of spirit in general. 'With reference to religion' this development cannot 'be represented in time'. Consequently, we find in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* a sequence of religions, which precede the 'revealed religion', that differs from the sequence in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. The sequence in the latter starts also with the 'natural religion'. But this form of religion is obviously related to the structure of the 'philosophy of nature' and not to that of the 'science of logic'. The first form of 'natural

[8] Bonn: Bouvier 1982² (Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 8), see pp. 135–146.

[9] H. Kimmerle (ed.), *Die Eigenbedeutung von Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeptionen*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2004.

[10] P. Cobben (ed.), *Hegel-Lexikon*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2006, pp. 44–50.

religion' is the 'religion of light'. Pure light is characterised by differentiations within itself. It contains the same structure as the 'system of the sun' in the philosophies of nature from 1801 to 1804. Then follow, similar to the historical sequence in the *Lectures*, the religions of plants and animals. In contrast to the historical explanations, the Indian 'religion of flowers' gets a specifically positive place here. In 'conscious animal life' we encounter in the text of 1807, like in the *Lectures*, the first subjective form of religion. In addition to that, moral qualifications are connected already with this stage of 'natural religion'. In the *Phenomenology*, 'natural religion' is followed by the 'religion of art'. In the centre of this form of religion stands the 'living piece of art' in the feasts of certain gods in ancient Greece. Here we find a clear accent on the concept of life. The 'revealed religion' of Christianity is the highest form of religion, which is identical to 'absolute knowledge' as the highest form of knowledge, as far as the content is concerned.[11] This is in accordance, of course, with the identity of 'absolute religion' and 'absolute philosophy' in the *Encyclopaedia* from 1817 on and in the *Lectures on the philosophy of religion* from 1821 on.

In the *Systematic Drafts* from 1802/03 until 1806, the 'philosophy of spirit' has a dominant position with regard to the 'philosophy of nature'. This is, however, only the case since the article on 'Natural law', which is published in two parts in 1802 and 1803 in the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, commonly edited by Hegel and Schelling. In this article, we can find the blunt formulation that 'spirit is higher than nature'.[12] In the *Jena Systematic Drafts* after that date, the 'philosophy of nature' nevertheless still forms the main part of the system as far as size is concerned. In the *Systematic Drafts of 1803/04* the text of the 'philosophy of nature' is unequally longer than that of the 'philosophy of spirit'. This preponderance of the 'philosophy of nature' only gradually becomes less in the *Drafts* of the following years: 1804/05 and 1805/06. In all these *Drafts*, the concept of life clearly plays an important role also in the 'philosophy of spirit' as the 'life of the spirit'. In the texts of 1803/04, we read in the 'philosophy of spirit' that the spirit as 'spirit of a people' returns to its 'absolutely

[11] Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. W. Bonsiepen & R. Heede, in: Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Hamburg: Meiner, vol. 9, 1980, pp. 363–421. The writings of the Jena-period are quoted from the critical edition. Quotations here are also my translation, (HK).

[12] Hegel, *Jenaer Kritische Schriften*, ed. H. Buchner/O. Pöggeler, in: Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Hamburg: Meiner, vol. 4, p. 484.

general element', the 'ether', and consequently to the beginning of the 'philosophy of nature'.[13]

The Concepts of Life and Nature in the Systematic Conception of 1800–1802 and Their Meaning for the Explanation of Religion

In the years 1800–1802, Hegel's 'system of philosophy' contains, different to the later conceptions, not *three*, but *four* parts. Part 1, the 'Science of the idea', is divided into a 'Logic' as an introduction to metaphysics and a 'Metaphysics' as the explanation of the idea itself. The parts 2 and 3, as a 'Philosophy of Nature' and a 'Philosophy of Spirit' respectively, show the reality of the idea. The 'Philosophy of Nature' presents in the 'system of the sun' the principle of a unity, which is differentiated within itself. The development of nature on earth (the 'earthly system') starts from the multiplicity of phenomena in 'mechanism' and returns via 'chemism' to the mentioned type of unity in the 'organic'. In the 'Philosophy of Spirit' the idea presents itself as the unity of consciousness, which divides into different elements. Then the idea "will summarise its . . . elements, representation and desire, which correspond to mechanism and chemism of nature, in itself." As a following step the idea will, in correspondence with the organic in nature, organise 'the realm of needs and of law' and be real as the 'free people'. From here on, the 'system of philosophy' will" finally in the 4th part in the philosophy of religion and of art return to the pure idea and organise the perception of God."[14]

This summary of the contents of the 'system of philosophy' of these years is taken over literally for most parts from the manuscript for his Lectures in the winter-term 1801/02. Part 4, the 'Philosophy of religion and art', which stands for the 'philosophy of the absolute', is also labelled by Hegel with a Schellingian term 'philosophy of the absolute indifference'. This part returns, however (different from Schelling's conception, as we know it from his writings), to the 'pure idea', as it has been presented in part 1, the 'Logic and Metaphysics'. In Schelling's conception of the 'system of philosophy' of that time, 'nature' and 'intelligence', the unconscious and the conscious way of producing, are united in the 'philosophy of art'. Hegel refers always, different from Schelling's conception, to both

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[13] Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe* I (1803/04), ed. K. Düsing/H. Kimmerle, in: Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Hamburg: Meiner, vol. 6, 1976, pp. 316 and 265–266.

[14] Hegel, *Schriften und Entwürfe* (1799–1808), ed. M. Baum/K. R. Meist, in: Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, Hamburg: Meiner, vol. 5, 1998, pp. 257–265, 263–264.

religion and art, which have to bring together what had been divided, 'nature and intelligence' or 'nature and spirit'. From 1801 on, it is clear for Hegel that, together with religion and art, also 'speculative philosophy' must lead to the return to the 'pure idea' of 'logic and metaphysics' and by that to the restoration of unity. In his book *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie*, of which the preface is signed in 'July 1801', Hegel formulates as Schelling's conception, with which he agrees, but which is not documented in Schelling's texts, that 'religion,' as the middle-term between 'art' and 'speculative philosophy,' is 'the living perception of absolute life'.[15]

These words refer directly to certain formulations in the *System-fragment of 1800*. In this text, Hegel does not yet speak of 'speculative philosophy' and the 'power to unite', which is inherent in it.[16] In this text—actually, these are two texts or two text-fragments—philosophy remains bound to finite thinking. It produces series of oppositions, which tend to a higher unity, but do not reach their aim. Only religion can lead to the highest unity and as a consequence to the experience of the infinite. Therefore, 'philosophy must end up with religion'. In and with religion human beings are elevating themselves 'from finite life to infinite life'. The 'infinite whole [is] an infinite universe of life'. When man 'elevates himself to the living [universe], unites himself with it most ardently, then he worships God'.[17]

The concept of life is obviously of fundamental importance, when religion is taken into consideration. The same holds true for the 'system of philosophy' as a whole. The 'philosophy of nature' is dealing with natural life, which is explained in the first instance as the 'system of the sky' that is called by Hegel—in his *Habilitationsdissertation*, which is written mainly in 1800—an 'animal'.[18] The 'system of the earth', from 'mechanism' via 'chemism' to 'the organic', is presented as the path towards life in the full sense of the word. The inner dynamics of spirit, by which it is pushed forward from one shape of the human world to the other, is thought of as the 'life of the spirit'. And the 'philosophy of the absolute indifference' is understood, as we have seen already, as a presentation of 'absolute life'.

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[15] Hegel, *Jenaer Kritische Schriften*, p. 76.

[16] Idem, p. 14.

[17] Hegel, *Frühe Schriften*, ed. E. Moldenhauer/K. M. Michel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe*, vol. 1, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971, pp. 421–422. This edition is relatively reliable and for everybody at hand. I quote from it in my translation (HK).

[18] Hegel, *Schriften und Entwürfe* (1799–1808), p. 237.

The different parts of this 'system of philosophy' are not documented in the remaining passages of the *Systemfragment of 1800*. They can be reconstructed by using the information on the 'Philosophy of Nature' and the 'Philosophy of Spirit', which we have from texts of the years 1801 and 1802. Thus it becomes clear that not only the religious dimension of this system is strongly determined by the concepts of life and of nature, but all parts of that system. If this is the case, I dare say that Hegel's thought during this period can be characterised as 'animistic'. Everything is understood as 'living', which means also that everything has a soul. The affinity of Hegel's thought in these years with Spinoza's philosophy, especially with the *deus sive natura,* underpins this interpretation. He contributes to the Spinoza-edition of H. E. G. Paulus, which appears in 1803.[19] Moreover, this affinity is also expressed by the fact that his metaphysics until 1803/04 is based on the Spinozian concept of 'substance'. Only in the *Systematic Drafts* of 1804/05 Fichte becomes more important for Hegel again and when the conception of the *Phenomenology* of 1807 is prepared, which says that there is a unity of 'substance and subjectivity'.[20]

Up to this point my considerations can be defended easily in the realm of recent Hegel-research. However, the following step, which I will take, is new and therefore risky. This step is to a certain extent prepared by my contribution to the Rotterdam Hegel-symposium of 2003 on the specific meaning of the Jena systematic conceptions. In the already mentioned *Differenzschrift* of 1801, Hegel states, also in this respect clearly different from his later convictions, that philosophy 'has no history', but that its task is 'the same at all times', namely to grasp in concepts the conditions of its own time.[21] From an intercultural philosophical perspective, I have added to this statement, that philosophy then also will have this same task 'in all places' and 'in all cultures'. Correspondingly, I want to say here that the animistic conception of religion as it is worked out in Hegel's writings from 1800–1802, can be related to conceptions of the 'religion of nature' and their animistic way of thought as we find them in other cultures.

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[19] Hegel, *Schriften und Entwürfe* (1799–1808), pp. 513–516.

[20] K. Düsing, 'Von der Substanzmetapysik zur Philosophie der Subjektivität. Zum Paradigmenwechsel Hegels in Jena', in: Kimmerle (ed.), *Die Eigenbedeutung von Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeptionen*, pp. 185–199.

[21] H. Kimmerle, 'Das Verhältnis von Philosophie und Geschichte am Anfang der Jenaer Periode des Hegelschen Denkens und dessen aktuelle Bedeutung', in: *Die Eigenbedeutung von Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeptionen*, pp. 11–24.

4. The 'Religion of Sorcery' as the First Concrete Form of the 'Religion of Nature' in Hegel's Lectures Since 1821

General Description of the 'Religion of Sorcery' and Its Occurrence with the Eskimos

In paragraph 'b. The Concrete Representation' of the first chapter of Hegel's manuscript of 1821 for his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (in the lecture-notes of students from 1824 this paragraph is called 'b. Representation of God'), Hegel describes concrete forms of the 'religion of nature' in different cultures. He starts with the 'religion of sorcery'. In my critical reading, I will follow the text of the lecture-notes of 1824. As a general characteristic of this first concrete form of the 'religion of nature', it can be said that it expresses the 'power over nature', which the 'single self-consciousness' possesses or thinks to possess. Human beings can heal sick persons by magic practices or make rain, when it is needed. This power is something 'spiritual'. With the presence of something spiritual the presence of God in the world of man is given. In correspondence with the conceptual determination of the 'religion of nature' (see II. 1) this is to be understood as the first concrete form of religion, which is not at the same time the foundation for the ensuing forms. The 'religion of sorcery' is described as the 'oldest' and the 'most wild and rude' form of religion.

For a more detailed description Hegel uses rather recent reports of travellers (from 1819), which deal with the religion of the Eskimos. The Eskimos call their sorcerers 'angekoks'. About them is reported that they have the power to make storm come up or calm it down, or to bring whales close to men. They do this by using words, making gestures and dancing until they lose consciousness. The Eskimos do not have any 'figure, human being, animal, or anything like that to worship'. According to the notes of Jaeschke, related to this passage, Hegel has not read well or not taken over carefully the reports about dancing. The reports on dancing refer to general cultural habits and not specifically to religious forms of conjuration. (L2 24, 272–275/176–179) Hegel finds the 'religion of sorcery' also in Mongolia, in Africa and in China.

The African Form of the 'Religion of Sorcery'

For his extensive descriptions of the 'religion of sorcery' in Africa, Hegel quotes from the reports of missionaries, especially of the Capuchin

J. A. Cavacci from 1694 (original Italian edition 1687).[22] Hegel is aware of the fact that these reports are old and little trustworthy, because the missionaries are partial when they talk about non-Christian religious habits and representations. However, he does not take pains to get more recent and more trustworthy sources, which were certainly available for him. He takes over the stories of Cavacci almost literally. These stories contain conjuration of bad spirits by strange and exotic means, healing of sick people with most cruel practices and a lot of killing and cannibalism at different occasions. No critical remark is made by Hegel when he quotes from these one-sided stories. He describes in a somewhat more adequate way the knowledge and practices of the rainmakers. These people know much about weather conditions, but they also use magic practices and certain forms of conjuration. This corresponds to the facts. The magic practices, however, have highly negative connotations. In a similar way is spoken about medicine men and -women. They have extensive knowledge of healing herbs, but combine it with magic practices. In addition, they take social relations into consideration when they heal sick persons. (L2 24, 274–281/179–185; 281–293/185–197)

Hegel regards the way of doing things by the traditional healers as a higher type of sorcery. He speaks of 'indirect' or 'mediated sorcery'. The healing herbs are the means, by which the power of sorcery can work. A *reflection* is at stake, a spiritual procedure, which interrupts the direct operation of the power of sorcery. Hegel deems it important that some kind of 'objectification' takes place here. The subject matter of religious worship becomes partly independent, gets the form of a self-reliant object. In this context, fetishism is discussed, which is rather important for African religion. Plants, animals, rocks, rivers and also artefacts can be adored or worshipped. They have the function to protect the house, village or city or to create a holy place. According to Hegel all this is part of the lowest and rudest form of religion. One step higher leads to the religion of the Chinese empire, where all power of sorcery, all power over nature and over humans, is concentrated in one person, the emperor. This form of the

[22] Cf. Walter Jaeschke in Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*. vol. 4b, 1985, pp. 839–840. Jaeschke gives the exact reference of the book of Cavacci, from which he takes extensive documentation of the context of Hegel's quotations: J. A. Cavacci, Historische Beschreibung der in dem unteren occidentalischen Mohrenland ligenden drey Königreichen Congo, Matamba, und Angola. Und derjenigen Apostolischen Missionen so von denen P. P. Capucinern daselbst verrichtet worden … auß dem Welschen in die Teutsche Sprache übersetzt, München: 1694.

'religion of sorcery' is not discussed here. As mentioned above, the ancient Chinese religion is not in every year when Hegel has given these Lectures, subsumed under the lowest form of religion. Like the Indian and Egyptian religions in those cases, it is part of the 'religion of imagination'.

5. 'Religion of Spirits' in Traditional African Thought

The Belief in Spirits and the Animist Religion

Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (since 1821) are related to the chapter on 'Revealed Religion' in the *Encyclopaedia of philosophical sciences* (1st edition 1817). They provide, so to speak, the prehistory of the concrete religion of spirit, the revealed religion of Christianity, which has the same contents as the absolute truth of absolute philosophy. The 'religion of life', which is documented in Hegel's systematic writing of the years 1800–1802, is also related to philosophy in an essential way. In 1800, religion is higher than philosophy, because philosophy is restricted to finite thinking. In 1801 and 1802, religion and philosophy are on the same level: the absolute self-consciousness of life is expressed in the religious language of representations or in the philosophical language of concepts. However, there is no prehistory of the absolute religion of Christianity. If I provide in the following text some details about the African religion of life as we can know it today, this will not be part of such a prehistory of the Christian religion. It is the explanation of a religion of life, which shows in a different, but equivalent way, what the details of such a religion can look like.

There is no direct relation between Hegel's ideas about a 'religion of life' and the concrete form of this religion in sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, it should be said that Hegel in this period has thought about Africa much more positive than in his later conception, when Africa is not part of world-history at all.[23] It can be made credible that the rebellion of the slaves in Haiti in 1802/03, the self-liberation of the black slaves of this island, has inspired Hegel for his conceptualisation of the dialectics between master and servant.[24] In the *Systematic Drafts of 1803/04*, Hegel does not yet speak of the dialectics between master and servant like in

[23] See note 26.

[24] S. Buck-Morss, 'Hegel and Haiti', in: S. Hassan & I. Dadi (eds), *Unpacking Europe. A Critical Reading*, Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen 2001, pp. 42–70.

the famous chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, but of a sudden turn in the relation between master and slave.[25]

It is in general necessary to depart from a different appreciation of African and other non-Western cultures than Hegel and his time did. Otherwise, it would not make sense to connect the 'religion of life' in Hegel's philosophy of 1800–1802 to the traditional animistic religion of African peoples south to the Sahara. These cultures have been regarded as primitive by a colonial ideology, which has been justified philosophically also by Hegel in his later writings. As I have mentioned already, the later Hegel in his philosophy of history does not situate Africa on the lowest level of world-history, but totally outside of it.[26] If we presently work on a decolonisation of the mind, it is part of this endeavour to come to a new estimation of animism as the traditional African religion. 'Life' is the central notion of traditional African thought and religion. The whole universe, nature on earth and the human world are parts of the interplay of the forces of life. All beings in this interplay have a soul. That is also expressed by the idea that all beings can be the dwelling place of spirits. Therefore, the traditional animistic African religion can be characterised as a 'religion of spirits'.

With regard to the dwelling of spirits in all beings, one difference is important: their presence in the visible and the invisible world.[27] In the visible world, the spirits are united to things in nature and to human beings. In the invisible world they exist without such a union, but purely as spirits. They have some kind of a non-physical bodily existence. The visible and the invisible world, however, are not separated from each other. They exist on the same scene. Therefore, it would be more adequate to speak of a visible and an invisible dimension of the world.

When a human being passes away, his spirit leaves his body and exists from this moment on purely as a spirit. The spirits of the deceased or more in general of the ancestors, play an important role for the now living people. The spirits can also dwell in natural things. This makes of the belief in spirits an animistic religion. Indeed, animals, plants, rivers,

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[25] Hegel, *Jenaer Systementwürfe* I (1803/04), p. 311.

[26] H. Kimmerle, 'Hegel und Afrika', in: *Die Dimension des Interkulturellen*, Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi 1994, pp. 85–112, especially 109–112.

[27] See for the following text: H. Kimmerle, 'The world of spirits and the respect for nature: towards a new appreciation of animism' in: *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, vol. 2, 2006, pp. 249–263. The most important sources for this article are: G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London: Sheldon Press 1974[3] and T. Fourche & H. Morlichem, *Une bible noire*, Brussels: Max Arnold 1973.

rocks etc. have a soul, for spirits can dwell in them. Trees are preferred as dwelling places of spirits. They are bigger, stronger and older than human beings are. Their tops reach high into the air so that they can easier make contact with the invisible world of spirits.

There are not only good, but also bad spirits. In the universe, in nature and in the human world harmonious relations are presupposed. That is the case as long as the good spirits prevail over the bad. Human beings or the spirits within them have the task to help maintaining the harmony by contributing to the preponderance of the good spirits.[28] When we consider, what happens presently in and between African countries (the mutual genocide of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, the struggles between Hema and Lendu in eastern Congo or the long lasting civil war between Moslems and Christians in Sudan and Nigeria), we can have heavy doubts about the maintenance of harmonic relations in the universe and in the human world. It is not easy to understand these horrible events. We do not know what really is at stake for the people concerned. It might be possible to compare these events with the terrible stories, which Hegel takes over from Cavazzi. However, also in other parts of world we find different estimations of the value of human life than in the West. Just think of the suicide-attacks of Moslem-fighters against their enemies in the western world and even against fellow-citizens and fellow-believers. Also in the West, we have experienced horrible examples of genocides in recent times. Stories about the conduct of US-American soldiers towards prisoners of war in Iraq or in Guantanamo testify to exorbitant cruelty.

In African traditional religion the spirits in natural things and those of the ancestors exist close to the now living people, so to speak on the same scene, as I have said already. Independently from them there is a Supreme Being, far away, somewhere in heaven, from where He reigns the universe. In certain parts of West Africa, there is also a belief in deities, who live in between the spirits and the Supreme Being. They take care of the fertility of the land and of the women, of good weather conditions, preponderance in war situations etc. In many cases, they are responsible for the well-being of certain regions and the people who live there. The Yoruba who live in the present states of Nigeria, Benin and Niger believe in hundreds of deities with specific tasks.[29]

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[28] M. B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare: Mond Books 1999.

[29] Ch. Staewen, *Ifa—African Gods Speak. The Oracle of the Yoruba in Nigeria*, Hamburg: LITVerlag 1996.

African Philosophers About Animism and the Belief in Spirits

African philosophers have no problem with the religious beliefs of their peoples. They do not find that the belief in spirits is in opposition to a rational way of thought. According to them, spirituality and rationality are not contradictory. I could give many examples for that from the writings of Odera Oruka from Kenya, Appiah from Ghana, Oluwole from Nigeria, among others.[30] Gyekye from Ghana is critical in respect of the belief in spirits. Nevertheless, he does not contest the belief in spirits as such. He is afraid that an "excessive and incessant attention to the ancestors" and what they would have done in the present situation is "an impediment to the cultivation of the innovative spirit or outlook required for making progress in the . . . transition to modernity." Instead, he pleads for an adaptation of the " 'pristine values and attitudes' to the 'setting of the present'." Struggling against excessive corruption, he tries to reanimate traditional values under changed conditions. Traditional harmonious relations in the human communities are highly appreciated by him: mutual support for each other, especially for those who are in need or in dangerous situations. Also in this respect, he warns for sticking in an uncritical way to the traditional ways of thinking and acting. In a final analysis, he suggests for the relations in the human world a "moderate communitarianism."[31]

Conclusions

In most of the African countries south to the Sahara, Christianity and Islam are the biggest religions. In their present form, they have taken over many elements from animism. Also traditional animist representations and practices still exist. 'Black Islam' in the countries directly under the Sahara is impregnated by the belief in spirits and the magic powers of their religious leaders.[32] Moreover, within the big number of Christian

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[30] H. Odera Oruka, *Sage Philosophy. Indigenous Thinkers and Modern Debate in African Philosophy*, Leiden: Brill 1990, pp. 74–75; K. A. Appiah, In *My Father's House. Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*, London: Methuen 1992, pp. 218–220; S. B. Oluwole, *Witchcraft, Reincarnation and the God-Head*, Lagos: Excel Publishers 1992, p. 52.

[31] K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity. Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997, pp. 257–260, 189–191 and 75–76.

[32] R. L. Moreau, *Africains Musulmans*, Paris/Abidjan: Présence Africaine/Inades Edition 1982; V. Monteil, *L' Islam noir*, Paris: Le Seuil 1964.

denominations, the speaking in tongues, the healing of sick people by the power of belief or exorcizing bad spirits are practices that occur daily.[33]

In the West, this kind of religious representations and practices is pushed back strongly since and by Enlightenment. This is also characteristic for the explanation of the 'religion of nature' in the context of a 'religion of spirit' in the later Hegel. The 'religion of life' and its animist connotations in an earlier period of Hegel's thought, which I have brought to the fore, cannot be related directly, and first of all not in the context of the Enlightenment mentality that prevailed at that time, to the traditional animist African 'religion of life'.

However, in subcultures, in literature and figurative art and in language, the belief in spirits has never disappeared totally in the West. Derrida has recently worked out a new 'spectrology', that is a new conception of spirits, spectres and phantoms. In his book *Spectres de Marx*, he determines the reality-status of spirits and spectres as the 'present absence' or the 'absent presence'. He analyses in this connection the unconscious or not as such recognizable powers in politics and economy.[34] He does not take the step to speak also of spirits in nature, as it is done in African traditional thought what I propose to be taken seriously. In the realm of this discussion, the relation between the 'religion of life' in Hegel's writings of 1800–1802 to animist religious representations, as they are practised in sub-Saharan Africa, becomes meaningful.

[33] J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, New York: Anchor 1970.
[34] J. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, Paris: Galilée 1995.

HEGEL ON CHINESE RELIGION

Sander Griffioen

1. Introduction

The focus of this contribution is Hegel's approach to Chinese religion. The main sources are the 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Towards the end, we venture into the broader field of the intellectual history of Europe's encounter with China. Our aim there is to determine the significance of Hegel's contribution compared to the pioneering work of the Jesuit fathers and Leibniz.

Concerning the reception history, there is one large field we will not enter. We will not deal with the Chinese reactions to Hegel. Apart from the problem of having to rely on materials that for the greatest part have not been translated, it would also be incongruent with the present contribution. Hegel's reception in China has only little to do with his writings on China, which, as we will see, are ill suited to impress a Chinese public. Fortunately, in this respect others have done what we will not do. Especially through the recent work of Martin Müller much of this terrain has been covered.[1]

The body of texts on China is far from large. The section in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* only counts nine pages (five of which serve as an introduction to oriental philosophy in general). The section in the 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is somewhat bigger: about thirty-five pages; a few pages on Lamaism included. (L2 27, 547–579/445–475). The chapter on China in the *Lectures on World History* is the largest: forty-four pages in the most recent edition, offering a well-structured survey of China's ancient history. However, this is still relatively small. Throughout Hegel is dependent on secondary sources. On the whole he is content to gather materials without establishing what is reliable and what is not.

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[1] Martin Müller, 'Chinas Hegel und Hegels China: Untersuchung zu 'Rezeption' als Interpretationskonstellation am Beispiel der chinesischen Beschäftigung mit Hegels China-Sicht', *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, Vols. 10–11/ 2004–2005 (2006). He is also the editor of an extensive bibliography: 'Die chinesischsprachige Hegel-Rezeption von 1902 bis 2000. Eine Bibliographie'. *Hegeliana*, Vol. 16, Frankfurt am Main: 2002 (480 pp.).

Although the texts show a keen interest in the Orient, there is not one aspect of Chinese thought that is dealt with exhaustively. Even though these texts tell us less about China than about Hegel's philosophy, they nevertheless need to be taken seriously. It would be too easy to conclude that Hegel's account of Chinese thought represents a pure regress compared to the Jesuit fathers, and to Leibniz, Wolff and Goethe. Studying the texts leads to a more nuanced conclusion. Yes, there is regress in some respects, but in others, Hegel can be said to have carved out a *sui generis* position in the receptionhistory, which is worth being studied.

2. Orientation

Hegel's study of oriental religion and philosophy (Religion of Ancient China, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.) only starts in the 1820's.[2] With respect to China, his foremost source is the *Jesuit Mémoirs concernant les Chinois* (1776–1814). For his knowledge of Taoism he is mainly dependent on Abel Rémusat, *Mémoire sur la vie et les opinions de Lao-Tseu* (1823).[3] Until 1824, these exploits do not effect his overall classification of religions: The religion of ancient China remains subsumed under the 'nature religions', within which category it represents the rubric of 'the religion of magic'. However, from 1827 on the picture starts to change. As Jaeschke puts it, then Hegel's approach to the pre-Christian religions comes closer to a 'sequence of interpretations' than to the application of a rigid system. Although in 1827 the religion of ancient China is still classified as magical, it now represents a 'developed religion of magic'. Eventually, in 1831, all links between China and nature religions are severed.[4]

One peculiarity needs to be pointed out at this stage, the lack of a sharp demarcation between religion and philosophy. Where the texts show a preference for 'religion', it is because (as we will see) the category of 'philosophy' in a strict sense is not applicable to China and to the (broader) Oriental world, since philosophy presupposes a measure of freedom unknown to the Orient. This explains why Hegel in his own expositions shows preference for 'religion' as a term with a broader application than

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[2] Cf. Walter Jaeschke, *Hegel Handbuch*, Stuttgart: Metzler 2003, p. 461.

[3] See Hodgon's Editorial Introduction to G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, One Volume Edition, Peter Hodgson (ed.), Berkeley: Univ. of California Press 1988, p. 43.

[4] Cf. Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction' in: Hegel, *The Lectures of 1827*, pp. 40–46, and Jaeschke, *Hegel Handbuch*, pp. 461–2.

'philosophy'. Nevertheless, there is no watertight division between religion and philosophy. The religion of Ancient China is being interpreted and assessed throughout as if it were an aspirant philosophy. Clearly, Hegel's interest is in doctrines, in thought contents, and less in religious rites and customs (although he does deal with these in the pertinent sections of the *Lectures on World History*). Finally, the texts also use 'philosophy' in a non-emphatic sense. This is true for general references to 'Oriental philosophy', 'Chinese philosophy', etc. Here Hegel simply follows common designations.

3. Three Stages

Hegel's survey of Chinese religion opens with what he calls 'the state religion of the Chinese empire'. It comprises the religious practices and doctrines as reconstructed on the basis of the (quite heterogeneous) materials collected in the *Shujing* (the *Book of Annals*), and includes the teachings of Confucius. Only around 1827 does he gain knowledge of Taoism, mainly through Rémusat's study. He then starts to distinguish three stages in the development of Chinese thought. The first stage being the 'State religion', the second one being represented by Taoism, and the third one by Buddhism. With respect to the latter, there is no distinction between Indian and Chinese Buddhism. In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, the survey of Chinese philosophy proper closes with a section on the Yi Jing (Vorl. 6, 371–3). Systematically those are at the level of the second stage, and will be included here accordingly.

Laozi, whom he regards as an older contemporary of Confucius, is portrayed as a reformer of a much older Taoist 'sect'. This second stage entails a shift from a nature religion to a higher, more speculative form of thought. Thus, it is not Taoism that is classified as a religion of nature, but the State religion. Normally the latter is viewed as essentially moral (esp. in its Confucian shape), and the former as focussing on Nature rather than on a moral order. The explanation is that Hegel takes Heaven (*tian*), the central concept of the state religion, to refer mainly to the physical order, rather than to the moral order. Whereas, on the other hand, he holds that Taoism represents a higher, purer level in the development of thinking. Hegel discovers here the beginning of speculative thought. As we will see, his interest is drawn by what he takes to be vestiges of Trinitarian thought in certain texts.

The treatment of the Yi Jing resembles the approach to Taoism. Hegel appreciates its speculative interest as to the order of the cosmos, which

he considers as a major progress vis-à-vis Confucius' moral teachings. However, no matter how speculative its intentions, the outcome is found wanting. Hegel thinks the hexagrams of the Yi Jing are not equipped as a medium of thought and are only able to grasp the external order of things.

It is only in the third stage, represented by Buddhism that Oriental religion is thought to reach its apex. Buddhist thought is praised for having developed the concept of the One Substance in which all particularities and individualities submerge. Here thinking attains infinity, liberating itself from all attachment to finite life. In this respect Buddhist thought is on a par with Spinoza's philosophy. (L2 27, 564/461; 573–574/470–471)

4. State Religion

Let us take a closer look at each of the stages. The first stage is most extensively dealt with in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Although, as mentioned before, *tian* (Heaven) is assumed to connote primarily Nature, these Lectures do stress that ancient teachings are moral and social rather than anything else. This shows that China does not neatly fit Hegel's systematization. 'Magic' is another category that appears strangely out of place in the present context. On first hearing, one is inclined to think it is introduced to account for the fascination China exerted on an impressible European public. In fact, the reason for its use is quite different: it is because *tian* is thought to be entirely indeterminate and therefore for its content dependent on the whims of the rulers. Just as in more primitive religions of magic, such as found among the Inuit, magicians and conjurers (L2 27, 541/439) play an essential role in finding out the will of Heaven, China developed a system of divinations placed under the supervision of high state officials, the mandarin class. According to Hegel, this state religion lacks any form of rationality. 'The emperor is lord over the visible world of the mandarins just as he is over the invisible Shen.' (L2 27, 555/453)

The descriptions of the Shen (spirits) make clear that Hegel focuses on the chthonic aspect of Chinese ancient religion, viz. the local genii (Vorl. 12, 162), at the expense of the ouranic, heavenly aspects.[5] Therefore,

[5] Raguin (following the research conducted by Kristoffer Schipper) has shown that official religion focused on the Dao of Heaven whereas popular religion was primarily interested in local, terrestrial spirits: cf. Yves Raguin, *Leçons sur le taoïsme*, Taipei: Institut Ricci, 1989, pp. 119–121.

it is only logical for him to assume that the common people are not able to develop an outlook transcending their own localities and hence cannot but fall prey to all sorts of superstition once the emperor recedes. 'The Chinese are the most superstitious people of the world; they have a ceaseless fear and anxiety of everything, because everything external has a significance for them, is a power over them . . .' (L2 27, 561/458). In a similar vein the 1831 manuscripts read: 'This power is that of the Shen, and with this an enormous realm of superstition comes into play.' (L2 27, 561/458, note 135)

5. Taoism and the Yi Jing

With respect to Taoism Hegel's attention is drawn to places in the *Daodejing* (the book of *The Way and the Power*, attributed to Laozi) that evidence triadic cosmological thought, esp. chapter 42: 'Tao gave birth to One, One gave birth to Two, Two gave birth to Three, Three gave birth to all the myriad things.'[6] This text was one of the proof texts in Rémusat's effort to show a direct relation between China and the Bible. Whereas Schelling in his *Philosophy of Mythology* (1857) expresses serious doubts about Rémusat's speculations, Hegel reproduces the hypothesis of a historical link to the biblical account of the creation of the world.[7] He concludes that Laozi's text offers Trinitarian thought in a rudimentary form: 'Unless three determinations are recognized in God, "God" is an empty word. Right at the beginning of thinking we find the very simplest and most abstract determinations of thought . . .' (L2 27, 559/456) However, the 1827 manuscript from which this quote is taken is quick to add: 'but one should not believe that a higher, spiritual religion has established itself in this case.' (560/457). Hegel argues that the Dao remains abstract, and

[6] In the translation of John C. H. Wu, *Tao Teh Ching*, Boston & London: Shambhala, 2005. This cosmology has many parallels in ancient Chinese thought. An illustration which spells out the implications somewhat further is offered by the *Suo Wen* (a dictionary dating from the 2nd C.) in its annotation of character for 'one' (*yi*): 'Le Un est initial; c'est le commencement absolu; une fois La Voie (tao) établie dans *et* par le Un, Ciel *et* Terre sont produits *et* distingués, les Dix mille êtres évoluent *et* s'accomplissent.' (*Dictionnaire Ricci de caractères chinois*, Paris-Taipei: 1999, Vol. 1, p. 814).

[7] Cf. Knut Walf, 'Christian *Theologoumena* in Western translations of the Daoists', in: *Bible in Modern China*, red. Irene Eber e.a., Monumenta Serica XLII, Sankt Augustin (Dld) [not dated], p. 128, note 21; Günter Wohlfahrt, *Hegel und China. Philosophische Bemerkungen zum Chinabild Hegels mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Laozi*, in: *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, 3/1997, pp. 144–5.

that whatever concretization Taoism brings only accrued to the person of Laozi instead of to the Tao (560/457). Hegel is referring to the cult of Laozi in popular Taoism—which in fact is of later date than the *Daodejing*. This unhistorical interpretation finds reaffirmation in the 1831 manuscripts.

It is interesting to dwell a moment on Hegel's critique of the Yi Jing. (Vorl. 6, 371–373)[8] His main point is that the sixty-four hexagrams only represent the order of the cosmos in an external and static fashion. The reason why Leibniz had a much keener eye for the inner connectedness of the hexagrams[9] and their ability to express transformations may well be because Hegel was led by an assumed relationship between the hexagrams and the inflexible character of Chinese, a topic brought up in the same context (Vorl. 12, 152–153). He considers, with some justice, Chinese characters as less flexible than a phonetic system.[10] Furthermore, he holds the non-inflecting character of Chinese language responsible for a tendency for representations to be juxtaposed rather than connected. In his mind to miss inflection makes a language a poor medium to articulate dynamic relationships—a view for which nowadays it will be hard to find support among linguists.[11]

6. Buddhism and Spinozism

'The religion of Fo' (Buddhism) represents the third and final stage. In all Lectures the space reserved for this stage is large (relatively speaking) compared to the previous stages. However, the reason is not that extra space is needed for a widening of the textual basis, for in this case Hegel also wholly depends on secondary sources. In fact, the basis is now narrower than before. Peter Hodgson in his introduction to the 1827 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* only lists certain reports by travellers and a general history of China. (De Mailla's *Histoire générale de la Chine*, Paris, 1777–1785). Apparently, on approaching the top Hegel prefers to travel light. Evidently, he is not interested in the history of Buddhism's Indian origins and its later career in China, Japan and Korea. His interest is rather

[8] Young Kun Kim, 'Hegel's Criticism of Chinese Philosophy', in: *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 28, No. 2, Sinological Torque (1978), pp. 174–176.

[9] See esp. Karel L. van der Leeuw, *Leibniz. Over de natuurlijke theologie van de Chinezen*, Budel: Damon 2006, pp. 57–63; 130–136.

[10] 'Was die Schriftsprache selbst betrifft, so ist dies herauszuheben, dass sie das grösste Hindernis der Beförderung der Wissenschaft ist.' (Vorl. 12, 153)

[11] The inflexibility of (spoken) Chinese is one of the myths debunked by John DeFrancis: *The Chinese Language. Fact and Fantasy*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 1984.

to highlight what he thinks is its central concept: *Substance*, or rather: the notion of the One Substance.

Contemporary European issues at least as much prompted the choice of this concept, as a reconstruction of the inner development of Chinese religion. The most obvious relation is with the controversies surrounding Spinozism. The parallel with Spinoza is present right from the outset. Just as the latter attempted to overcome Cartesian dualism by positing One Substance, so Hegel places a Buddhist concept of One Substance at the apex of Oriental thought. Consecutively Hegel contrasts this notion with the concept of pantheism employed by the critics of Spinozism. His point is that those critics have a poor understanding of the Spinozist notion of the All and could learn a lot from the Orient. The great achievement of the latter is to have understood the power of negation. Hegel uses the term 'idealism' as a contrast to the vulgar realism of the critics of Spinozism who falsely attribute to Spinoza a notion of the Divine as an *Allesheit*, i.e. a container in which all things of this world are dumped. To do justice to Spinoza a more appropriate term than pantheism would be *acosmism*, since in the latter case Divine omnipotence would rightly be understood as a negation of the world. (L2 27, 574/470, note 172)

> For a human being, this state of negation is the highest state: one must immerse oneself in this nothing, in the eternal tranquillity of the nothing generally, in the substantial in which all determinations cease, where there is no virtue or intelligence, where all movement annuls itself. All characteristics of both natural life and spiritual life have vanished. (L2 27, 565/462)

7. Subjectivism, Subjectivity and Philosophy

Oriental idealism is not only contrasted to the hypostatization of finite things of which Hegel accused the opponents of Spinozism, but is also pitted against Romanticist subjectivism. Lecturing in 1825/26 on Oriental thought Hegel uses the opportunity for a side-attack on Friedrich Schlegel's subjectivism. The Orient is praised for having discovered the self-sufficiency of pure thinking ('thought for itself'), and for having turned this into the foundation of truth. On the other hand, Romanticists indulge in a 'subjective vanity' that dissolves all objectivity. The advantage of the Orient is to have developed 'an intellectual substantiality' in which all 'subjective vanity is drowned'.[12] However, as Hegel contends, the disadvantage is that the

[12] 'jene subjective Eitelkeit darin zu ersäufen' Cf. Jaeschke, *Hegel Handbuch*, p. 485.

Orient only has a dim awareness of God as subject, and as a consequence fails to give the human person its due. (L2 27, 576/472)[13] This is also why oriental thought could not evolve into a genuine philosophy.

So while opposing both objectivism and subjectivism, Hegel is at the same time concerned that objectivity and subjectivity receive their due. He also makes clear that the acknowledgment of free subjectivity is the 'to be or not to be' of philosophy. Since he finds this lacking in the Orient, the conclusion cannot but be that we are looking here in vain for genuine philosophy. Especially within the Confucian pale there is little to find. Even as a moral teacher Confucius cannot measure up to Cicero. Cicero's *De Officiis*, Hegel suggests, *is* more valuable than all the works of Confucius; to which he sarcastically adds that it would have been better for the sage's reputation if these had not been translated.[14]

Conclusion: Hegel's Place in the Reception History

After this survey of relevant texts, a certain disappointment is hard to avoid. The texts are not many, and nowhere witness of any mastery. Interpreters before us, of course, reached a similar conclusion. One of them, Young Kun Kim, nevertheless derives consolation by supposing that Hegel at least has left us with hard but stimulating questions: 'Nevertheless, Hegel has contributed to the study of Chinese philosophy by posing tough questions, which I am afraid, have not yet been answered.'[15] Unfortunately, Kim does not tell us what these questions were.

Is this to say that 'Hegel and China' is a subject that could just as well be passed over? This would be the case if Hegel would represent a sheer regress compared to the Jesuit fathers, Leibniz, Wolff, Goethe, and Schelling. In fact, his position has something of a *sui generis* character. In order to understand his position we need to take a number of points into account.

Ex oriente lux. Hegel follows Voltaire in placing China at the beginning of history: his Lectures on world history, religion and philosophy all start with China. So the Far East and no longer Asia Minor is honoured as the

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[13] Idem, p. 484.

[14] 'Ciceros 'De Officiis' ist vielleicht besser für uns als alle Werke des Konfuzius. Über die Übersetzungen urteilen die kompetenten Richter, man hätte für Konfuzius' Ruhm besser gesorgt, ihn nicht zu übersetzen; es sei ganz gewöhnliche, weitschweifige Moral.' (Vorl. 6, 371)

[15] Kim, 'Hegel's Criticism of Chinese Philosophy', p. 179.

cradle of humanity. Herein he follows Voltaire who was the first historian to break with the older tradition of starting in one way or another with the biblical account of Israel and the surrounding nations. Whereas Bossuet's *Discours sur l'histoire universelle* (1681) still followed the old model, Voltaire started a revolution by letting his *Essai sur les moeurs et l'esprit des nations* (1756), of work of comparable ambition, open with China![16] Hegel is a child of this revolution.

Historicism. Although the sun rises in the east, it sets in the west. With Hegel, the Western sunset is more important than the Eastern sunrise. Both the East's fascination with substantiality and Western reflexivity are placed in a developmental perspective:

> This Oriental way of viewing things is opposed to that of the Occident: just as the sun sets in the West, so it is in the West that human being descends into itself, into its own subjectivity. (L2 27, 572/469)

Therefore, in Hegel the Voltairean revolution does not give the Orient a central place. With Buddhism China and India have run their historical course. The Spirit then moves on to Europe, leaving behind the achievements of the Orient as empty shells on the shores of time. For each of the participants the clock of history only strikes once.[17]

Concurrence with Leibniz. Only in passing is Leibniz' interest in China mentioned. Yet there is congruence on an important point. Leibniz' *Discourse on the Natural Theology of the Chinese* (1716) was prompted by the criticism of an Anti-Riccian group levelled against the legacy of Ricci. The point the critics wanted to make was that Ricci and friends had been naïve in their attitude towards China: the so-called natural theology of the Chinese being in fact a form of pantheism, if not atheism.[18] This criticism is strikingly similar to the attacks on Spinozism. So Hegel would have answered the anti-Riccian faction in much the same way as he answered the anti-Spinozists, i.e. by arguing that the Orient and Spinoza developed an understanding of substantiality that as such is neither pantheistic or

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[16] On this revolution, see Karl Loewith, *Meaning in History. The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*, Chicago: 1949, Chapter 5.

[17] 'Die Uhr der Philosophien, die bei Hegel dieselbe wie die des Weltgeistes ist, schlägt nicht zweimal dieselbe Stunde . . .' See Ernst Bloch, *Subjekt-Objekt. Erläuterungen zu Hegel*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1962, p. 366.

[18] See Van der Leeuw, *Leibniz*, pp. 43–47; Daniel J. Cook & Henry Rosemont, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Writings on China*, Chicago: Open Court 1994, pp. 5–10.

atheistic but adequately articulates Divine omnipotence.[19] Thus he would agree with the gist of Leibniz' defence of the Riccians.

In line with the anti-Riccians. A great difference vis-à-vis Leibniz is that natural theology for Hegel has to be (negated and) further developed in order to lead to true knowledge. Leibniz' rather eclectic method of looking for strong points in both cultures is anathema to Hegel. Therefore, with Hegel the distance to China vastly increases. Leibniz envisaged a fruitful exchange based on a win-win situation. He argued that they are stronger in perceiving, we in thinking.[20] We may conclude that such an exchange between equals would be incongruent with Hegelian historicism. This same historicism also explains why the Voltairean revolution fails to gain momentum. Although following Voltaire in granting China a primal position in the history of civilization, he also makes clear that it represents a stage to be overcome.

[19] Cf. Vorl. 12, 160, where Hegel deals with the state religion: 'Die gelehrten Chinesen, welche die Missionare Atheisten in der Staatsreligion nennen, nehmen dieses Abstrakte Wesen als . . . . das innerste Wesen der Welt . . .'

[20] From a letter to Father Grimaldi, 1692, cf. Van der Leeuw, *Leibniz*, p. 51. Similar: Cook & Rosemont, *Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz*, p. 46 (Preface to the Novissima Sinica).

HINDUISM: A RELIGION OF FANTASY

Paul Cruysberghs

1. Introduction

At the end of the 18th century, eastern religions became quite popular in the Western world. Romanticism was in search of alternatives for the typically rationalistic approach of both dogmatic and natural theology by the Enlightenment philosophers and theologians. In Hinduism in particular, it discovered a religion that seemed to be free from both rigid dogmatism and abstract rationalism. The very fact that this religion was older than Christianity gave it an aura of originality that made it the more attractive. The sacred texts were initially translated into English and later on into other languages as well. In Germany August Schlegel published an *Indische Bibliothek* Series.[1] His brother Friedrich, who had learned Sanskrit during his stay in Paris, wrote a book on *The Language and Wisdom of the Indians* to which he added a nice selection of Indian texts that he had translated on his own.[2] In his most important writings Herder showed an everlasting love for what he called "dieses Land der Sehnsucht". Georg Forster translated William Jones's translation of Kalidasa's Sakuntula and Wilhelm von Humboldt introduced and translated the Bhagavad-Gîtâ, a crucial episode from the Mahâ-Bhârata.[3]

Hegel paid close attention to the Hindu religion as well; more than to Buddhism as a matter of fact. In our survey we will refer to the four versions of the Lectures on the philosophy of determinate religion as they have been edited by Walter Jaeschke: the manuscript, being the basis of the 1821 Lectures (L2 M), the Lectures of 1824 (L2 24), those of 1827 (L2 27),

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[1] See in particular A. W. Schlegel (ed.), *Indische Bibliothek*, Bd. 2, H. 4, Bonn: 1827.

[2] F. Schlegel, 'Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Inder. Ein Beitrag zur Begründung der Althertumskunde. Nebst metrischen Uebersetzungen indischer Gedichte', Heidelberg: 1808.—Kritische Friedrich Schlegel-Ausgabe, ed. by E. Behler, 1. Abt. Bd. 8, 1975.

[3] W. von Humboldt, 'Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gîtâ bekannte Episode des Mahâ-Bhârata. Gelesen in der Akademie der Wissenschaften am 30. Juni 1825 und am 15. Juni 1826, Berlin, 1826'.—W. von Humboldt, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Abt. 1: *Werke*, Bd. 5, Berlin: 1906.

and those of 1831 (L2 31).[4] The manuscript is rather restricted as far as Hinduism is concerned, but the student notes of the 1824 and 1827 Lectures are quite extensive. The 1824 Lectures are the most elaborate, stressing the metaphysical dimension of Hinduism; but they are, alas, less clear than the 1827 Lectures. The 1827 Lectures, while being shorter, are indeed more perspicuous and concrete. Of the 1831 Lectures, no complete transcript seems to be extant anymore, but we have at our disposal some excerpts passed down to us by David Strauss. Considering the dominant role of categories and thought determinations (*Gedankenbestimmungen*) in Hegel's philosophy in general and in the philosophy of religion in particular, we will focus mainly on what he called the metaphysical dimension of Hindu religion (L2 M, 100/5) and to a lesser extent on the concrete representation of the gods and the cultic aspects of Hinduism.

In addition to the Lectures, we must also take into consideration Hegel's extensive review of Humboldt's book about the Bhagavad-Gîtâ (H, 19ff).[5] In this review, published in the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, Hegel does not just refer to Humboldt, but also to August Schlegel's *Indian Library* and to some important English sources as well. It focuses more on the (subjective) cultic and ethical aspects than on the (objective) metaphysical ones and, accordingly, it shows how eager Hegel was to improve his acquaintance with the Hindu religion, wrestling with its complexities and incoherencies, and comparing it with the Christian religion and, quite remarkably, with recent, romantic, tendencies in philosophy as well. Hegel's interpretation of the Hindu religion remains basically the same in the different versions of his Lectures, and hence we will not focus on what are, after all, minor differences between them. However, one important modification that Hegel carries out, will require our attention: the treatment of Buddhism which preceded Hinduism in the 1824 and 1827 Lectures, was moved in the 1831 Lectures to a position following Hinduism. However, as for the internal treatment of Hinduism, Hegel's interpretations do not seem to have changed that much.

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[4] The English translations of the German text of the Lectures are mine (PC); except for those of 1827, that refer to the translation in the Hodgson edition of Hegel's *Lectures*. In either case, also where my translation diverts from that of the Hodgson edition, a reference to this (standard) edition is added to the text.

[5] G. W. F. Hegel, 'Humboldt-Rezension. Ueber die unter den Nahmen Baghavad-Gita bekannte Episode des Mahabharata; von Wilhelm von Humboldt', Berlin 1826.—*Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 16, *Schriften und Entwürfe II* (1826–1831), Frankfurt am Main: Meiner, 2001, pp. 19–75 (H).

In what follows I will first introduce the general context in which Hegel dealt with the Hindu religion, then I will discuss Hegel's endeavour to interpret its basic content with the help of typically logical categories; and finally I will focus on the cultic aspects of the Hindu religion.

2. The General Context: Nature Religion

In the manuscript and in the 1824 and 1827 Lectures Hegel deals with Hinduism in the context of what he terms 'immediate', or 'natural', or 'nature religion' (*unmittelbare Religion, natürliche Religion, Naturreligion*).[6] These terms refer to African and Eskimo religions, but also, and even primarily to Oriental religions such as the traditional Chinese, Mongolian, Indian, and Persian religions. All these religions, Hegel claims, present a 'natural unity of the spiritual and the natural' (L2 24, 233–234/139–140). In the nature religions, indeed spirit has not yet separated itself from nature, and is still identical with it. Consequently, natural and spiritual elements are mixed up with each other. The situation can be compared to what Hegel terms the natural soul in his anthropology:[7] on an elementary pre-conscious level the soul, though possessing already a certain level of ideality, is still permeated of nature, without taking a distance from it.

The basic notion in nature religion is that of (immediate) being or of substantiality (L2 M, 95/2). Natural objects like the sun do not function as symbolic representations (presupposing a distinction between meaning and immediate existence) of the God; they *are* themselves the "immediately *present* God" (L2 M, 106/13). In that sense, we can consider nature religions as being pantheistic: God is all things in them: ἐν καὶ πᾶν. Heaven, stars, earth, plants, animals, and the human being constitute "One Kingdom of Heaven". In so far as these objects merely *are*, they are immediate manifestations of "One single divine life" (L2 M, 100/5). Of course, people do not adore finite natural things as they are as such, in the prosaic sense, but only in so far as they are the expressions of a universal power immanent in the things themselves, in the same sense as Spinoza considered

[6] Strictly speaking, Hegel distinguishes 'natürliche Religion' and 'Naturreligion', the first being identical to the latter, but only in so far as in it 'thought (*der Gedanke*) is brought to the fore' (144). 'Natürliche Religion' thus refers primarily to the way religion is considered by authors like David Hume (cf. his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*). Together with the English translators of the 27 Lectures, we translate 'Naturreligion' as 'nature religion'.

[7] G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 20, §391 ff.

the finite modifications to be the expressions of Nature or God. In fact, Hegel interpreted nature religion as a pre-metaphysical form of Spinozism (L2 M, 104/10). Just as in Spinoza, there is only one substance that must be defined as Nature or God. The objects of adoration are not finite things as such, but the power of nature that manifests itself as a 'natural subject' (L2 M, 105/11). Only in so far as that universal power of nature integrates its other in itself and animates it, people can adore animals (elephants, apes, cows) and human beings (Dalai Lama, kings, Brahmans) as gods. These are not symbols in fact, they are *this* particular animal or human being, in its or his actuality, but that actuality is precisely conditioned by the immanent presence of the vital power in it.

In spite of Hegel appreciating the tendency of these religions to give the absolute a further determination of subjectivity, concreteness and singularity, he still considers them to be at quite a low level of religiosity. They recognize the presence of the absolute in singular beings, but they reduce, so Hegel says, the singularity of these beings themselves to a *merely* immediate *singularity in which spirit is lacking* (einer [...] *geistlosen Einzelheit*) (L2 M, 108/14). On the one hand, Hegel applauds the fact that animals as objects of religion have drives, desires, power of life, that they have an instinct, "that secret, suitable doing from within" (L2 M, 108/14). Yet the fact that the instinct exists in the form of absolute, i.e. mere singularity and finiteness, is its weakness. Instead of this singularity being a point of departure for sublimation and idealisation of itself, it loses itself in its determinateness, in 'the now' of its naturality and finitude.

We mentioned already that it was part of Hegel's strategy to compare other religions with the Christian one. He did this not just because his students and readers were Christians, but also because he considered the Christian religion, both logically and historically, as the highest form of religion. Religions considered to be hierarchically lower can be made understandable not just by discerning in them the hidden dialectics of logical categories and concepts, but also by contrasting them to the higher forms. Therefore, Hegel could not refrain from comparing e.g. the Hindu incarnations of the divine in human beings with the Christian incarnation. In the Christian religion, God also became man, but Jesus, so he argued, was never adored as a god when he was alive. Only after he had ascended into heaven and was seated at the right hand of the Father, was he adored as divine. It is only as spirit, not in his immediacy, that a human being can be considered as an incarnation of the divine. This spiritual dimension, however, appears to be absent in Hinduism and in nature religions in general (L2 M, 108/15).

Still, Hegel was well aware of how seductive nature religions were for a certain kind of romanticism. Thanks to their primitive and immediate character, the spiritual and the natural not yet having fallen apart, nature religions had the aura of being the oldest and most original ones, not yet contaminated by the influences of culture and reflection. They were considered as reminiscences of a paradisiacal situation of harmony, beauty and innocence, in which the human being, possessing a kind of wisdom, which it is suggested, is subsequently lost, was still in a natural unity with nature and with God. Thus nature religion was presented as "the true, mostly outstanding, actually divine religion" (L2 24, 238/144),[8] whereas Hegel himself rather considered it as "the most contemptuous of all religions" (L2 M, 108/15). With all his sympathy for the wisdom present in these forms of religion, Hegel, sticking to the superiority of the Christian religion, strongly condemned any exaltation of what was presented as being 'original' or 'primitive'. A zealous enthusiasm for eastern or even more 'primitive' religions is completely foreign to Hegel.

3. The Hindu Religion: A Religion of Fantasy

In the manuscript, Hegel deals with immediate religion without making any further distinctions. It is clear, however, that, for the most part, he has the Hindu religion in mind.

When discussing the immediate or nature religions in the 1824 Lectures Hegel distinguishes: 1) the religion of magic (encompassing African (Negro), Eskimo, and Chinese religions, but also Buddhism), 2) the religion of fantasy, which is actually the Hindu religion, 3) the religion of the good (the Persian light religion) and 4) the religion of riddle (the Egyptian religion).

In the 1827 Lectures the Chinese religion of the state is explicitly mentioned as a transitional form between the religion of magic and Buddhism, which receives a separate treatment (presented as the religion of

[8] In his commentary Jaeschke refers to both Schelling (*Vorlesungen über die Methode des academischen Studium*) and Friedrich Schlegel (*Sprache und Weisheit der Inder*) as typical devotees of such an old religion and wisdom (see note to 146, 170–172 in 4b 688). Complaining about the low level of education in 19th century Germany, people critical of their own culture had a tendency to contrast the former wisdom of the Indians to it (L2 24, 249/154). In L2 31, 723/612 Hegel mentions explicitly Friedrich Schlegel's thesis that fragments of 'this primitive, true religion of the human spirit' can be found in all other religions.

being-within-self), preceding the religion of fantasy which is now characterised as the Indian religion.[9]

I have already mentioned the important modification carried out in the 1831 Lectures and taken up by Marheineke in the first and second editions of the *Werke*, in which Hegel moves the Buddhist religion from its inferior position before the Indian religion to a hierarchically higher position after it. The part on determinate religion is divided now in three chapters, the first of them being natural religion, which now encompasses exclusively the Eskimo, Mongolian and African religions (the religions of magic in L2 27). The second chapter introduces a new principle of division: 'The Splitting up (*Entzweiung*) of the Religious Consciousness in Itself'. In this chapter, both the Chinese and the Indian religions find a place of their own, followed by the Lamaic-Buddhist religions. The third chapter, which is not our concern here, deals with the religion of freedom, which refers to the Greek and the Roman religions, but they are preceded by so-called forms of transition, to which the religions of the good (the Persian and the Jewish religions), the religion of pain (the Phoenix and Adonis cults), and the Egyptian religion belong.

In order to understand what happened here, we must first turn to Hegel's analysis of the religions of magic in the 1824 Lectures. There are two elements that Hegel considers characteristic of the religions of magic. The first element is a practical one: that of power. A magic relation to the world presupposes a spiritual self-consciousness manifesting its overall power over nature in all its concrete forms. For example, the magic practices we find in African religions, hardly merit the name of religion, since there is no explicit reference to any divinity, but the exercise of magic power is manifestly present. The second element, which Hegel distinguishes in his 1824 Lectures, is a theoretical one. It can be found in the Chinese Fo tradition, the Tibetan Lama and other Buddhist traditions. Here the God is present in human shapes like the Dalai Lama or the Buddha. Thanks to metempsychosis however, the God shows his being-within-self, his identity with himself independently of the particular human or animal bodies it reincarnates in. This absolute reflection of the divine in itself, in which all distinctions are dissolved (L2 24, 316–317/219), is considered by Hegel

[9] The English edition of the 27 Lectures translates 'Indian religion' as 'Hindu religion'.—It is remarkable that in the first and second editions of the *Werke*, edited by Hegel's friends, the Buddhist religion (religion of being-within-itself) is dealt with after the Hindu religion (religion of fantasy). Marheineke, the editor of the Lectures on philosophy of religion, might have found evidence for this intervention in the 31 Lectures.

as the basic idea of divinity in general and thus of all religions worthy of that name. (L2 24, 316/218)

According to the 1824 Lectures, the Hindu religion, qualified as the religion of fantasy, brings the two moments present in the religion of magic, that of power and that of being-within-self, together. In both Fo religion and Buddhism the being-within-self is indefinite and therefore qualified as Nothingness (Nirvana). In contrast with the essentially negative perspective of Nirvana fostered by Buddhism, Hinduism endows the divine with the determinateness that was part of the concrete exercise of magic power in merely magic religions. In the Hindu religion, Hegel contends, "Divinity is objective with all its plenitude of content". (L2 24, 317/220) Whereas the Buddhist world is empty, a concrete divine world arises in Hinduism. Constituting a unity of the infinite essence and the finite shape, the divine develops into a concrete form;—and from a Hegelian point of view this is the considerable kind of progress we are supposed to encounter in all higher religions.

In comparison to the 1824 Lectures, the 1827 Lectures place a different accent to the treatment of Buddhism, giving it a separate treatment in the first place (cf. supra). This is quite understandable when we take into consideration that Buddhism, at least in its essence, can hardly be considered as a form of magic. Nonetheless, Hegel confirms that Hinduism is further developing the substantiality and the being-within-self that Fo, Lama and Buddhist religions stand for, "in the totality of its externality". (L2 27, 579/475) And, as in L2 24, he considers this particularisation of the universal substance, this adding of "the richness of the world" (L2 27, 581/476) as substantial progress when compared to the Buddhist position.[10] Thanks to this concretisation of substantiality both natural and spiritual powers, as they manifest themselves in the concrete world, are recognized as belonging to the absolute; a belonging that has a double side: on the one hand, they appear in their particularity and independency; on the other hand, they appear as vanishing and being consumed by the universal being-within-self of the first substantiality. (L2 27, 581/477)

As a matter of fact, Hegel argues, Hinduism expresses—in its own way, "according to the instinct of the concept" ("nach dem Instinkt des Begriffs") (L2 27, 586/482), the general structure of the (logical) idea: in the first place it is "one, immediate and identical with itself" (L2 27, 581/478);

[10] "Here, therefore, the horizon is enlarged; we have here the totality. The viewpoint is concrete; that is the necessary progress." (L2 27, 581/477)

secondly, the idea differentiates itself internally, particularizes itself into different, particular shapes and powers; thirdly, the particular powers have to return to the One, to the one universal substance, insofar as they are contained by it. (L2 27, 581/478) Precisely because Hinduism makes room for the second moment of concreteness, it must be considered as a richer form of religion than Buddhism. The third moment however, is presented in a deficient way—and that is the conclusion of both the 1824 and 1827 Lectures (L2 24, 326/229; L2 27, 581–584/478–479) (see infra)—and therefore the Hindu religion itself is deficient. Still, in both versions Hegel recognizes that the Hindu religion contains "the three basic determinations of the concept" (L2 24, 326/229), i.e. "the basics of the reasonable development, though only in its most general determinations". (L2 27, 582/478)

As for the 1831 Lectures, here Hegel also recognizes the three moments of the concept, accusing especially the third moment of offering only a determination in which spirit is absent (*geistlose Bestimmung*). (L2 31, 734/622) More important, however, is that, as we mentioned earlier, Hegel modified quite drastically the general structure of his Lectures. He reduced the natural religions to the Eskimo, the Mongolian and the African ones, i.e. the former magic religions, which are now, more explicitly than before, denied the status of being religions in the strict sense. More important for us, however, is the introduction of a new perspective: that of the internal splitting up (*Entzweiung*) of the religious consciousness into a substance, on the one hand (God), and the transitory accidents (the subjects), on the other. In a way this perspective was already present in the former Lectures, in which substantiality was considered as a general perspective of nature religion as such. Now, the internal splitting up of the religious consciousness into a substantial and an accidental side becomes the common characteristic of the Chinese, Indian, and Buddhist religions and separates them from the merely natural religions. In the Chinese religion, the substance is recognized as the foundation (*Grundlage*) which is determined in itself. It is thought fundamentally as *measure*, to which human beings have to conform their actions (cf. Confucianism). The Indian religion considers the substance as an abstract unity, akin to the human spirit, to which the human being has to elevate itself. The Lamaic-Buddhist religion for its part is now—fundamentally different from the previous interpretations—a more concrete form of religion as compared to Hinduism, in so far as the substance becomes concrete in it: it takes the form of a particular individual (the Dalai Lama, Buddha Gautama), to which other human beings have to raise themselves, which is supposed

to result ultimately in the complete annihilation of the self (Nirvana). Concreteness remains the hierarchical criterion to evaluate the different religions of substantiality. Yet instead of stressing the concreteness of the relationship to the world, as Hegel did in the 1824 and 1827 Lectures, he now focuses on the concreteness of the particular individuals in which the substance finds (as in the Dalai Lama) or found (as in Buddha) its concrete incarnation. However, apart from the evidence that Buddhism is a historically later development than Hinduism, Hegel's reasons for changing the hierarchical order of eastern religions are not very clear. His analysis of Hinduism remains substantially the same as in the former Lectures and, as for the transition, Hegel just stresses the fact that "these [Lamaism and Buddhism] religions are very akin to the Indian one". (L2 31, 735/623) The sole argument remains the one he mentions when dealing with Lamaism: "The general presence of the substance already stands down in favour of the concrete presence of the individual, which is worshipped as absolute power" (ibid.). The incarnation of power in one (Buddha) or more (the three Lamas) particular individuals, who are worshipped as such, seems to be a progress over against a worship of an endless plurality of more or less independent gods.

What might necessitate an upgrade of Buddhism is in fact that, after all, in the Hindu religion the concreteness of its form remains essentially natural: the moments of the divine fall asunder (falling asunder is typical of nature) as if they were independent entities. True religion, Hegel suggests, i.e. a religion of spirit in contrast to nature religion, asks for the concrete resuming of itself into itself. It requires that the concrete not just be posited as such, but that it be posited as ideal as well—and that it be recognized as such. This is not the case in Hinduism yet, whereas Buddhism, in spite of or thanks to its nirvana perspective, might be interpreted as a concrete unification of these moments. The Hindu world consists of a variegated multiplicity of gods, of powers, spiritual distinctions and sensations, all of which appear as isolated and as independent, taking the form of separate human beings or even animals (L2 24, 318–319/221).[11] This multiplicity of human beings and animals constitutes the "realm of fantasy" (L2 24, 319/222), in which arbitrariness appears to be the general rule: "an unrestrained flush (*Taumel*) of all this content" (L2 24, 323/226), a "jumble (*Wirrwarr*)"! (L2 24, 323/226–7) Fantasy indeed can master any content

[11] It might be considered as significant that the Buddha himself is worshipped as a god, as an incarnation of Vishnu in particular. (L2 31, 736/623)

whatsoever and link freely and arbitrarily representations together. Thus, the richness of fantasy has its reverse side as well: the forms appear to lose their initial independency and end up by being totally at the mercy of the arbitrariness of imagination (see also H, 74).[12]

Insofar as imagination is done justice to in the religion of fantasy Hegel appreciates it undeniably. Still, because of the appearance of arbitrariness and of the keeping apart of the different representations of the divine, without any definite structure, he considers it as a degradation of the basic (read: logical or conceptual) determinations instinctually and unconsciously present in Hinduism. As a consequence of these determinations having a "wild, disgusting shape" (L2 24, 324/228), they appear to be "baroque" (L2 24, 324/228) and even "horrifying" (*greuelhaft*). Still, it is precisely in the conceptual determinations, and not so much in the fanciful shapes or representations, that Hegel as a philosopher is interested in.

4. The Conceptual Determinations

In line with what we have hitherto developed, Hegel distinguishes two moments in the conceptual framework of the Hindu religion: 1) that of the substantiality of the reflection-within-self and 2) that of the form the substantiality is manifesting itself in: the determinations of the absolute. (L2 24, 325/228) We will deal with these moments first, before considering the concrete shape they take in the deities of Brahma (1) and Shiva (2).

1) The moment of universal substantiality is the eternal rest of being-within-self. It is defined as a power that is not directed towards anything else, in the way that desire is, but as a power that, still and quiet, being simply reflected in itself, is enclosed in itself. (L2 24, 325/228) It thus remains isolated from the multiplicity of things, from its own concrete particularisations: "this being-within-self [...] remains abstractly inward, purely by itself, as abstract power" (L2 27, 583/478). Nonetheless, it needs an existence anyway, although it is supposed to have it outside the particularity of the second moment. It rather takes existence in the "con-

[12] Hegel thus contrasts the 'fanciful' (phantastisch) powers of the Hindu religion with the 'images of a beautiful fantasy' (*einer schönen Phantasie*) that he finds in the Greek religion: "They are particular powers, although it is a wild particularity in which there is no system but only intimations of what is understandable and necessary, echoed of understood moments but still no understandable totality or systematization, much less a rational one; instead only a multiplicity in a colorful throng" (cf. infra) (L2 27, 584/479).

crete existing (daseienden),[13] immediate human mind"[14] (L2 27, 583/478). How this is to be understood more concretely, we will make clear below, when dealing with the concrete shape the logical determinations take in Hinduism.

2) The substantial power, even when having its existence in the consciousness of concrete human beings, is to be distinguished from its manifestation, from the moments as they have been posited by the substantial power itself. These moments have a double status. They are independent beings and, at the same time, they are perishing and vanishing in the power of the One Substance. On the one hand, they in fact appear as independent persons, as divine persons who are the whole itself, so that the first moment, the moment of substantiality, as a matter of fact, disappears in the particular figures (Gestalten)[15] in which it manifests itself. Hegel has in mind the multiplicity of natural objects and processes that are deified and personified such as "sun, moon, mountains, or rivers; or [...] greater abstractions such as generation, perishing, change of shape"... (L2 27, 583/479). One the one hand, these gods are totalities by themselves which do not need anything beyond themselves. On the other hand, they disappear again, being absorbed in the One power. "The power [indeed] is the ideal, the negative, for which everything else is only as sublated, negated" (L2 24, 325/228). Thus both moments are alternating perpetually: once the One is presented, then the Distinction, and then the One again, etc. As a matter of fact, the One presents itself as a continuous alternating of the One and its Manifestations. (L2 24, 325/228; L2 27, 585/481)

Therefore, in a way, there are three, not just two moments that interplay. (L2 24, 326/229) There is 1) the One, the universal. It must be conceived as manifesting itself into objectivity (*Gegenständlichkeit*).[16] 2) Being itself divine, however, the manifestation itself becomes the whole God. Over against this [determinate] God, who is the manifestation of the first one, the latter, the first power that is in itself, the One as such, necessarily

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[13] 'Daseienden' has been translated in the English translation as 'concrete existing'.

[14] The English translator says: 'spirit'; however, I would rather translate 'Geist' here by 'mind', since it refers to the consciousness of a particular individual.

[15] This multiplicity of powers is described by Hegel in his 27 lecture as 'an unbridled polytheism' (L2 27, 583/479). He thus contrasts it with the Greek religion in which the gods have reached 'the beauty of figure'.

[16] As in Christian theology, it can also be termed 'eternal goodness': the One grants the determinate, which is intrinsically only apparent, momentary being, though it still remains absorbed in the absolute power of the One. The One allows the finite to have a shape of its own, without having any right of its own.

opposes itself. As such, however, it is reduced into a particular moment, so that beyond that an absolute One, a higher One, is to be posited, which can or must be called God as well. 3) Thirdly, there is the alternation of both moments. This is to be termed Change as such (Vishnu).[17] It is the process of genesis and corruption, of being brought forth and being annihilated: to be being as Not-Being. At the same time, these three moments must be considered as being One totality, a whole or a unity of its own.

These are the basic conceptual determinations Hegel distinguished both in the 1824 and in the 1827 Lectures.[18] In spite of the triadic structure of the One, which is referring to what we might consider as a truly dialectical structure, Hegel stresses the fundamental deficiency of the way it takes shape in the Hindu religion. (L2 24, 326/229) It is lacking a basic element that every truly spiritual religion, i.e. the Christian religion, is supposed to have. The third moment indeed is determined in Hinduism as mere becoming or change. However, that is not good enough. In the absolute idea, Hegel says, this third moment is determined as spirit. And spirit cannot be thought of in terms of mere transition. It must be conceived as a true return into itself, which is quite different from a continuous transition of being into non-being and vice versa. The third moment of Hinduism actually does not merit the status of being a third moment. That explains why the 1824 Lectures initially started the development of the metaphysical structure of Hinduism with only two moments, the third one being introduced (and criticised at once) only in the end.

[17] Hegel compares this third moment with what the Milesian philosophers used to call Δίκη or Justice.

[18] In L27 however the content is introduced in a slightly different way. Hegel suggests that in spite of Brahm representing the simple (einfache) substance, some (three) distinctions are introduced according to "the instinct of the concept" (L2 27, 586/482). 1) There is the totality as such: the abstract oneness. It is considered here as one of three—thus it is distinguished from and subordinated to the oneness that encompasses the three of them. 2) The second moment is the determinateness, the distinction as such; and 3) the third moment is the concrete unity of the distinctions. Brahm is the formless unity; according to its determinateness it is tri(u)nity. Thus we have two distinct powers: the triunity on the one hand (eternal goodness); then justice: that the being is not, but that it reaches its right to change, to become a particular determinateness. These three as a totality, being a whole and a unity, is called Trimurti: the three essences.

5. The Concrete Representations

As for the way the three basic determinations of the concept find expression more concretely in the Hindu mythology (L2 24, 327/230), we can be relatively brief. The triadic structure as such is represented as Trimurti. Murti means soul in general: all emanations of the absolute, all particular manifestations must be interpreted as souls. The three essences or shapes we distinguished up to now, and which we must identify as respectively Brahm, Vishnu or Krishna, and Shiva or Mahadeva, are Trimurti. From this perspective, the first moment, the One (Brahm), as an abstract unity, presents itself not as the unity of the other moments, but rather as just one of three: thus it is inferior to Trimurti (*ist heruntergesetzt*), in so far as the unity of the three (Trimurti itself as Oneness) is represented as different from the first Oneness. Still, we must firstly take into account that in the ancient texts, in the Vedas, neither Vishnu nor Shiva has yet appeared. They are both later developments, Hegel suggests. (L2 24, 334/236) Secondly, there are many other Gods besides the three that constitute Trimurti; and there are many sects, each being a particular cult of a particular god or gods: Mahadeva (male) and Yoni (female), and further Indra, the god of heaven, fire, cattle such as cows, elephants, horses, etc.). Hegel characterises this multitude of gods and goddesses as the sphere of mere imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), and, as connected with this, of confusion (*Verwirrung*) (L2 24, 335/237; cf. L2 27, 595/490). Nevertheless, in spite of the inevitable confusion, Hegel tries to make sense of at least the three highest gods.

1. The god Brahm, Brahma, or Brahman represents the first Oneness we referred to (L2 24, 327/230; 27, 585/481): it is the absolute One and is to be conceived as a neutrum. The Hindu God, differently from the Jewish one, who is conceived as a subject, is '*das* Eine', not 'der Eine' (L2 24, 339/242). It is "the eternal in itself with itself" (L2 24, 328/231), "*pure being*, pure universality, *supreme being* [in English], the highest being" (H, 62). In so far as Brahm is a particular god, being one of the three persons of Trimurti, (it is mostly called Brahma then), Brahm is conceived as '*der* eine', as a person, as a (masculine) subject. As soon as the One is one of the three, it is made into something particular, and, as a consequence, a higher instance is needed: that is Brahm (in contrast to Brahma).[19] At the same time we

[19] In so far as Brahma is considered as one of the three gods that constitute Trimurti, he is subordinated to the universal soul, which, in that context, is sometimes called Parabrahma,

must take into consideration that all the particular gods, in so far as they are further determinations of Brahm, are Brahm themselves. So, in a way, Brahm is reduced to the epitheton of Oneness. But if this is the case, then Brahm runs the risk of becoming an empty epitheton, just an epitheton of praise, as the Englishman James Mill in his *History of British India* had suggested. (L2 24, 328–329/231–232; H, 66) Thus both Vishnu and Krishna (cf. infra) are to be called respectively the highest and the great Brahm. And Shiva (or Mahadeva or Rudra) is called Brahm as well. But so too the natural elements such as the water, the sun, the air, respiration, and human faculties such as love and consciousness, understanding, or happiness: they are all Brahm. Thus Brahm, the One, is all oneness: everything that has any form of independency, of identity with itself, is Brahm.[20]

But Brahm is not just conceived as the Oneness in all that is one, it is also the substance from which everything proceeds or is begotten. Thus, it is presented as a creator.[21] At the same time, however, it appears as inert, formless matter. From this perspective Brahm, the One Substance, is both the masculine, formative activity, and the feminine, passive attitude. Therefore Vishnu, appearing as a creator in his turn, can say that Brahma is his uterus, in which he sowed his seed so that everything is procreated. (L2 27, 588/84)

The last remark I want to make about Hegel's examination of Brahm concerns his position in the pantheism polemics, which already comes to the surface in the 1824 Lectures (L2 24, 259–262/165–167), but more dominantly in the Humboldt review. Hegel agrees with Colebrooke's assertion that the old Hindu religion recognizes only one God, but that it does not sufficiently distinguish between the creator and his creation. (H, 64) In so far as Brahm is presented as Oneness, the Hindu religion can be considered as a form of monotheism. At the same time it is essentially pantheistic: being the essence of all things, Brahm is immanent in and identical with all things, though it should not be identified with the concrete and

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that which is above Brahma (L2 24, 328/231). In L2 27, consoling his students and apologizing for his own lack of understanding I guess, Hegel remarks that "one cannot say in what determinate relation such forms stand to one another" (L2 27, 588/483).

[20] Brahm, conceived under the category of pure being in which all particularity is dissolved, constitutes, according to Hegel, the sublime dimension of the Hindu religion, which does not mean that it is beautiful or true (H, 64). Because of its abstract character, pure being instead of being truly infinite is, as a matter of fact, in line with the beginning of Hegel's logic, a finite category.

[21] Hegel spends some time reporting the story, or rather one of the many stories, about the creation of the world. (L2 24, 330–334/233–236; L2 27, 588–589/484–485)

empirical things as such. It is "the *being* of their being-there (Dasein)", not their being there as such that is considered as divine. (H, 65) Just as in the first edition of his *Encyclopaedia* (GW, 19, 9 ff; 405 f), to which he himself refers explicitly, Hegel reproaches modern authors for identifying pantheism with the assertion that everything is God (*Allesgötterei*), a conception that, according to Hegel, exists only in the heads of these authors themselves. That Hinduism is pantheistic, but precisely not in a trivial sense, is illustrated clearly by the levels of knowledge Hegel quotes from the Humboldt book. There are three kinds of knowledge to be distinguished. True knowledge consists in "seeing in *all* that exists, only the *One unchangeable* principle, the undivided in the divided." (H, 65) The second level consists in recognizing the different or particular principles in the singular things, and the third, "the most disgusting one, the one of darkness", consists in only knowing the singular, without any reference to a general or universal principle. Thus, as a matter of fact, Hegel does not so much fault the pantheism of the Hindu religion; on the contrary, he appears to sympathise with it just as he does with Spinozism. He is rather blaming the "disgusting" interpretation of it by its critics.[22]

2. The second principle is the concrete existence (*Dasein*), the preservation (*Erhaltung*), the manifestation, of Brahm on earth. (L2 24, 327/230) That is Vishnu or Krishna. Being the incarnation of Brahm in general (*das Inkarnieren des Brahms überhaupt*) (L2 27, 589/486), Vishnu is incarnated in particular human beings like princes and kings, or in specific personifications of human ideals, etc. As a matter of fact, any human passion, like e.g. a love affair, can be conceived as an incarnation. Being the taste in the waters, the shine in the sun and the moon, the mystic word in the holy books, the tone in the air, the knowledge of the knowers, etc. Krishna is what is essential in everything that is. Still, the incarnations being particular essences, Krishna himself remains particular and limited. Therefore, all these particular generalities are to be conceived as absorbed in the One, in Krishna in so far as he is Brahm. (H, 66)

3. The third principle is that of change, of procreation and destruction (L2 24, 328/230; L2 27, 591/487). This is Shiva, or Mahadeva, "he who decays and procreates" (*der Verderber und Erzeuger*) (L2 24, 328/230–1). Shiva is the return of the multiple incarnations into unity. Since he is being and non-being at once, Shiva can declare: "What *is* am I, and what *is not*, am I"

[22] Still, we should not forget that Hinduism combines this basic mono- and pantheism with an 'unbridled polytheism'. (L2 27, 583/479)

(H, 66). He is both the present, the past and the future. "On the one hand" he is "the vast energy of life and on the other the destroyer, the devastator, the wild energy of natural life" (L2 27, 591/487). Therefore he is symbolized by the bull and the lingam (*Phallus*). As has been said before, this third moment, personified by Shiva, can be conceived as a prefiguration of spirit, but in a very deficient way. Hegel's criticism relates to the fact that the change occurs only in a *being* or a *natural* way: as becoming, or coming into being and perishing, not as a return of the One to itself: it is not a coming-to-self. The spiritual is not just change, Hegel argues, but change through which the distinction is brought to reconciliation with the first moment and through which the duality is sublated. (L2 27, 592/487)

6. Cultic Aspects

How does a Hindu relate to his gods? That is the topic of cult, which Hegel pays attention to both in his Lectures and in the Humboldt review. Cult is an essential part of religion that completes the concrete representations of the god or gods.

The "absolute or highest cult", Hegel affirms in the 1827 Lectures, consists in a "complete emptying out of the human, the renunciation in which the Hindus relinquish all consciousness and willing, all passions and needs (nirvana), [or] this union with God in the mode of integral self-concentration (yoga)". (L2 27, 595/490) It presupposes a "growing lonely of the soul in emptiness" (*Vereinsamen der Seele in die Leerheit*) which might be compared to Christian or other forms of mysticism, but that Hegel, as far as Hinduism is concerned, radically rejects as being mere "numbing" (*Verstumpfung*) (H, 42; see also H, 34). The absence of any content, the emptiness of consciousness which the yogi is striving for, is not what Hegel recognizes in true mysticism, which has been "rich of spiritual, often highly pure, sublime and beautiful productions, because in the externally silent soul it is at once a going of it into itself and a development of the rich subject (*Gegenstand*) to which it relates and of its relationships to the latter" (ibid.). This typical contrast between the Hindu cult, which is not just to be reduced to ritual sacrifices but encompasses a whole ethos, on the one hand, and a dimension of the Christian religion that is more or less akin to it, on the other, is symptomatic of Hegel's rejection of the excesses of the yogi ethos.

In the 1824 Lectures, Hegel distinguishes three different forms depending on the duration of the cult, being either momentaneous or more enduring.

1) In the first place, each Hindu is supposed to be Brahma himself, at least momentaneously, during the moments of prayer and meditation. The individual has to elevate itself to the level of abstract thought, to the level of the universal. Insofar as it is capable of doing so, it is Brahma indeed.[23] (L2 24, 336/238) This "deification, or rather Brahmification" (H, 68) makes it understandable that there is, strictly speaking, no veneration of Brahma itself: Brahma has no temples dedicated to him or it, people do not pray to him. In fact, everyone capable of the higher forms of meditation can declare: "I am Brahm or the highest being" (L2 24, 337/239).[24]

2) Whereas this first form of relationship of self-consciousness to the One is only momentaneous, the other ones are more enduring. One's whole existence should correspond to the universal represented by the god Brahm. Therefore, a transition must be made from the moment of silent solitude and prayer into life. As a matter of fact this implies that the human individual should renounce all forms of vitality: "total indifference toward everything, and complete austerity" (L2 27, 595/491) appears to be the motto. The One shall penetrate the entire concrete life. Therefore, the Hindus who are not Brahmans (see infra), have to make themselves into abstract Egos: they must give up any movement, any interest, any inclination, any connection with their families. Thus these saints, the yogis, venerated and fed by the other citizens, are making their lives into an enduring existence of Brahm.

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[23] This is the place where Hegel makes a reference to the modern religious belief that speaks in terms of immediate knowledge (Jacobi) (L2 24, 340/243–244): "Comparison with modern belief of reflection. Immediate knowledge; God unknown. Jenseits. God is outside me: but as a negative for me. Abstract being is the negative itself. Cf. the abstractum that Brahm is. Existence only in my selfconsciousness. Illusion to say something objective: god is only through my positing. The affirmative: only the I. Modernity: I am the universal, master of all determinations; I am the one that posited them. But modern reflection is more developed, more free than Hinduism saying silently: I am Brahm. Hinduism: candid (unbefangene) stage of abstraction, beside of which the rest of the divine world remains objective. In modernity: everything is posited by me. Positing has volatilized all content of sensuous and supersensuous world."

[24] Cf. Hegel's quote from Francis Wilford's *Essay on the Sacred Isles in the West*: "Wenn ich das Gebet verrichte zu irgendeinem der Götter, wenn ich mich auf den Boden setze, die Beine übereinander verschränke, die Hände falte und gen Himmel blicke und meinen Geist und meine Gedanken sammle, ohne die Zunge zu bewegen, so sage ich mir selbst, ich bin Brahm oder das höchste Wesen" (L2 24, 337/239). ["When I perform the púja in honor of some of the gods, I seat myself on the ground, with my legs crossed in such a manner, that each foot rests upon the opposite thigh, (not under it, like a taylor, but) like those who perform tapasya. Then with my eyes closed, and looking up to heaven, my hands moderately open, and close to each other, an a little elevated, I compose my mind and thoughts, and without moving the tongue, or using any of the organs of speech, I say inwardly I am Brahme, or the Supreme Being." (4b 720)]

The Yoga-doctrine, which Hegel also deals with extensively in the Humboldt review, is not considered by him as a real doctrine or science, as some philosophers had the tendency to do, but as a collection of assertions, which are primarily constructive and edifying (H, 30). Their main aim is "a *deepening without any content*, a giving up of any attention of external objects, of the activity of the senses as well as the silencing of any inner sensation of a wish or a hope or a fear surging up, the silence of all inclinations and passions, as well as the absence of all images, representations and of all determinate thoughts" (H, 34). Being oriented towards a complete absence of content (*Inhaltslosigkeit*) both of the subject and of the object, the Yogi is trying to reach a state of complete unconsciousness (H, 35). This state of abstraction is not to be understood as a transitional tension, but has to become a "habitual state of mind" (H, 35).[25] The highest form of perfection is a permanent state of abstraction—"a perennial solitude of the self-consciousness that has given up all sensations, all needs and representations of external things, thus no longer being consciousness,—even not a filled self-consciousness, which would have spirit as its content and would be insofar as it is still a consciousness;—an intuition, that does not intuit anything, that is not aware of anything—the pure emptiness of itself in itself" (H, 58).[26] Ultimately, the transformation into Brahma will liberate the Yogi even from metempsychosis (ibid.).

3. The third moment is particular to the members of one particular caste, that of the Brahmans. Each Brahman, each member of the caste is considered as Brahm. Thus the Brahman is the God for every other Hindu who does not belong to the caste. Typical of the Brahman is that his relationship to God no longer takes the negative form of renouncement. This is not so by accident: according to the logic of negation itself, we might say, the necessity of an affirmative relationship is confirmed. However, since the unity of Brahm remains "solitary, by itself" (einsam, für sich), the concrete fulfilment of this affirmative relationship is "a wild and unruly one" (*eine wilde, ausgelassene*) (L2 27, 600/495).

This is the source of the fanciful polytheism (*phantastische Vielgötterei*) (L2 27, 601/496) of Hinduism, to which we have already referred. Ignoring the independency of natural things, they endow them with the shape of

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[25] Comparing the yogi's practice to the Christian meditation (*Andacht*), Hegel, after having stressed the fact that both are essentially different because the Christian *Andacht* is not empty (cf. *mysticism supra*), sees an analogy between both, insofar as the Christian *Andacht* has to turn into a habitual state of mind as well in the form of piety (*Frömmigkeit*).

[26] Hegel compares his interpretation with the modern (i.e. Jacobi's) conception of 'immediate knowing'.

the only independent being they know, the human being. Thus the imagination (*Phantasie*) deifies everything in an anthropomorphic way. At the same time, however, the human being itself, not yet being able to distinguish its freedom from its natural side, is thought of in natural terms. As a consequence its life has no higher value than that of the natural objects upon which it depends. "For the Hindus" indeed, Hegel suggests, "human life is something contemptible and despicable—it has no more value than a sip of water" (L2 27, 602/497). Life gains worth only through its negation. This explains, according to Hegel, the cult of human beings sacrificing themselves, their wives, or their children.[27] The dependency on natural objects on the other hand, explains the many forms of superstition, which Hegel interprets as an indication of the fact that a true concept of freedom and of ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*) is absent. "And just as the superstition arising from this lack of freedom is unbounded, so it also follows that there is no ethics to be found, no determinate form of rational freedom, no right, no duty. The Hindu people are utterly sunk in the depths of an unethical life (*in die tiefste Unsittlichkeit*)" (L2 27, 603/498).[28] Not just in the Lectures, but in the Humboldt review as well, Hegel argues that ethical life and true education (*Bildung*) are "eternally" impossible amongst Hindus. He connects this with the fact that Hindu religiosity and the doctrine of duties connected with it, are determined exclusively by the law of the castes (H, 37). Hence Hegel's conclusion: "Instead of the work of wisdom, of goodness and justice, which is known as the work of the divine world government in a higher religion, the work that is fulfilled perpetually by Krishna, is just the maintaining of the caste difference" (H, 38).[29] In the caste of the Brahmans the inner relationship to the One has taken the form of something external and natural: that of being born as a Brahman (L2 24, 345/248). Those who belong to the caste of Brahmans are conscious of

[27] Hegel praises Humboldt paying attention to the fact that Krishna suggests the principle that when acting, we should renounce the fruits of our acts, somehow in the line of the modern Kantian principle that the good be done for its own case, duty for the case of duty. But just as for the Kantian morality, Hegel complains that there is no transition in the Mahabharata Episode to the question of the goals of our actions and the content of our duty (H, 23; 35).

[28] In the Humboldt review Hegel quotes the general governor of India, Warren Hastings, who in his foreword to the English translation of the Bhagavad-Gita, warns the readers that he has to admit "zum voraus die Eigenschaften von *Dunkelheit, Absurdität, barbarischen Gebräuchen und einer verdorbenen Moralität*" (H, 22).

[29] Here again Hegel compares the Hindu religion to the Christian religion, in which, he assumes, all distinctions of social position disappear and the human beings relate equally to God as human beings (GW 16, 38).

their essence as thinking beings. As such they are the reincarnated ones, those who are born twice: once in a natural way, and a second time via the abstraction of spirit.

As a matter of fact the caste system reveals the fundamental contradiction which is present at the very heart of Hinduism: that between the (ethical) order of acting, on the one hand, and the order of merely inactive (handlungslosen) submerging in Krishna, on the other (H, 40). This contradiction cannot be resolved because the highest moment of Hindu consciousness, Brahm, is in itself without any determination. Determinations all fall outside the unity and can only have the character of mere external or natural determination. "This very same opposition and contradiction appears everywhere, where external cult and ceremonies are connected at the same time with the consciousness of higher interiority" (H, 57).

Conclusion

The basic problem is that the Hindu religion, according to Hegel, is not capable of reconciling the abstraction of thinking in general with the particularity of the concrete. For that very reason its spirit is only that unrestrained whirl (*einen haltungslosen Taumel*), Hegel talked about in L2 24, 323/226, from one to the other, ending up with the unhappy situation of having to experience happiness only as annihilation of the personality (H, 59). From this perspective, Hinduism is far from being a religion of freedom, in which the concreteness of one's personality and one's concrete situation in the world is integrated, and not annihilated in the God relationship. These types of considerations, which show up time and again, make it clear that Hegel's conception of Hinduism is far from the romantic devotee's who expected a religious renewal to come from the east, despising the achievements of both Protestantism and the Enlightenment in the Christian tradition and expecting salvation to come from elsewhere. It goes without saying that Hegel's presentation and interpretation of the Hindu religion is not a neutral one, but the least one can say is that his treatment of it is a thoughtful one.

AVOIDING NIHILISM BY AFFIRMING NOTHING: HEGEL ON BUDDHISM

Henk Oosterling

> The image of Buddha is in the thinking posture with feet and arms intertwined so that a toe extends into the mouth—this [is] the withdrawal into self, this absorption in oneself. Hence the character of the people who adhere to this religion is one of tranquility, gentleness, and obedience, a character that stands above the wildness of desire and is the cessation of desire. Great religious orders have been founded among these peoples; they share a common life of tranquility of spirit, in quiet, 'tranquil occupation of the spirit,' as do the Bonze in China and 'the shamans of Mongolia'. Attainment of this pure, inward stillness is expressly declared to be the goal for human beings, to be the highest state. (L2 27, 564/461)

1. Introduction

The Hegelian discourse on Buddhism culminates in this image: the meditating Buddha swallowing himself. This image expresses for Hegel absolute immediacy, unarticulated *in-itself*. The toe-sucking posture resembles the snake swallowing its own tail as a symbol for eternity, for the infinite. The finite being of the human body of the Buddha is united with the infinite substance of divine power. It is devoid of negativity, at least in a dialectical sense, because its substance has not been objectified. The divine substance is not negated, made abstractly conscious in a *for-itself*. The divine rests fully in-itself. As one critic of Hegel phrased it in a quasi-mystical wordplay: "Are swallower and swallowee the same. Are they different? This indeterminacy is structural, not epiphenomenal. Subject, object and abject are smeared across one another unrecognizably."[1] For Hegel awareness of human limitedness is a necessary step to an identification, a union and uniting, with divine power and a precondition for

[1] Timothy Morton, 'Romanticism and Buddhism. Hegel on Buddhism', Praxis Series 20, par. 14. See: http://www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/buddhism/morton/morton.

subjectivity. In Buddhism this essential rupture with immediacy has not taken place.

This 'thinking posture' bears witness to an incomprehensible intimacy that not so much represents meditation—it is not a symbol—as it concretely embodies immediacy. The image triggers all sorts of associations that, psycho-analytically, can divert, pervert and subvert the Hegelian texture in different directions. Hegel positions all world religions within a hierarchy of collective consciousness that realize their essence in Christianity as the consummate religion with the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost as the exemplary triad. Retrospectively this power play is criticized as an ideological construct that favors Western metaphysics and politically legitimizes Western expansionism. Hegel's negative evaluation of Buddhism's *nirvana* can even be understood as an articulation of the Western 'horor vacui', the fear for emptiness. I will however concentrate on other aspects in Hegel's texture. I draw only one thread out of the Hegelian tapestry: the evaluation of Buddhist emptiness as the Void and nothingness. In spite of the fact that Hegel's positioning of Buddhism is in itself not nihilistic, his identification of Buddhism as a religion that is focused on nothingness has determined the modern debate on nihilism that even persists in the 21st century.

The dialectician Slavoj Žižek still qualifies nirvana as a 'primordial Void'. He frequently cites from Brian Victoria's *Zen at War* to illustrate the fascist, nihilistic mentality of Zen followers and criticizes the naïve hippy mentality of Western Buddhism as a perfect legitimization for late capitalism. Its adherers are accused of refusing to take a stand against capitalist consumerism. Their refusal of revolutionary commitment to truthful political action, due to their quietism, is contrasted by Žižek in a quasi-ironical Hegelian gesture with the revolutionary activist mentality of the man that institutionalized the Christian Church: St. Paul.[2] But is Žižek's disqualification of Buddhism as one of the modes of postmodern nihilism the only option?

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[2] See: Henk Oosterling, 'Radikale Mediokrität oder revolutionäre Akte? Über fundamentales Inter-esse', in: E. Vogt, H. J. Silverman (Hrgs.), *Über Žižek*. Turia+Kant, Vienna 2004, pp. 42–62; 'From Russia with Love: Avoiding the Subject. Why is Žižek's St Paul a Leninist?' in *International Journal in Philosophy and Theology*, 2009, pp. 236–253.

Within the dialectical tradition the accusation of nihilism is very persistent.[3] When we follow the trace back to the days of Hegel, the problem already starts with the very image that startled him: the toe sucking Buddha. The choice of this image is already a mistake. Hegel found this weird picture of what he thought was the Buddha in one of the books he consulted frequently for his analysis of Buddhism: Friedrich Creutzer's *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker* (Leipzig and Darmstadt, 1819). This plate however does not represent the Buddha, it refers to a Hindu subject: Brahmā Narāyana in the context of one of the canonical texts, the *Laws of Manu*. Hegel was even mistaken—in retrospect—as to the specific nature of Buddhism, because he relied mainly on sources that focused on the life of the Tibetan lamas. The difference between Buddhism and Lamaism, he states in the Lectures of 1824, "is only superficial". (L2 24, 307/211)

These 'mistakes' are exemplary for Hegel's research on what enabled him indirectly to position himself in the controversy on pantheism as atheism. F. H. Jacobi thematized a proto-nihilist atheism in a book on Spinoza in 1785. Together with Schelling and Hölderlin Hegel read this book as a student and discussed the *hen kai pan* (one and all) principle, but the controversy haunted his thoughts till his very last days. His treatment of this controversy foreshadowed the nihilism debate that was installed as a philosophical topic by Nietzsche and still resonates in Žižek's disqualifications of Buddhism in the Western hemisphere as 'New Age spirituality' and 'Pop Buddhism'. Žižek lifts Hegel's *parti pris* over the turn of the century into the first decade of the 21st century.

Is it possible to revalue Hegel's analysis of Buddhism on a more affirmative basis? Can the tight chain that connects *nirvana*, void and nothingness be broken? In order to throw some light on a different understanding of nothingness—and by implication to redirect the 'nihil' in nihilism—I will firstly clarify how Hegel applied his sources on Buddhism for the positioning of this determinate phase of religious consciousness in his systematic philosophy (§2) and why he kept shifting its position in the different series of Lectures. (§3) Then I will turn the tables by focusing on Buddhism's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy. I will briefly describe the way Kyoto school based Buddhist thinkers try to reconcile Zen Buddhism with Hegelian philosophy (§4) and how they interpret *nirvana*

[3] Adorno's remarks on nihilism in *Negative Dialectics* (1973, orig. 1966) scorn the possibility of 'believing in nothing' and qualify 'the image of Nirvana' positively as 'nothingness as something' (380).

as emptiness. This will enable me to formulate an affirmative approach to the Void that favors relationality over identity, and affirmation over negation. (§5) Returning to Žižek's accusations I will counter these with current philosophical projects that have integrated the Kyoto affirmative approach to the Void in their philosophy: French philosophy of differences, especially in the works Jacques Derrida and the cooperative works of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. (§6)

2. Historical Context

Was Hegel a religious man? There has been much debate on this issue. During his lifetime Hegel frequently balanced on the edge of what was tolerable for the authorities.[4] An accusation of atheism would have been the end of his career as a university professor. It happened to Fichte in the 1790's at the University of Jena. If atheism starts with the proclamation of the death of God then Hegel is a suspect too. God's death was not for the first time proclaimed by Nietzsche's madman on the marketplace in *The Gay Science* (section 108/125/343) and more prominently in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Kant had already spoken about faith within the limits of reason, proposing that we speak about morality *as if* God does not exist. The 'internalizing' effect of this denial was appreciated by Hegel: methodologically sublation (*Aufhebung*) focuses on internalization after the necessary alienation from one's self. The result of this rupture, i.e. of transcending of one's limits and realizing one is always part of a more encompassing whole, is called subjectivity.

Nevertheless Hegel criticized Kant's Enlightenment aporia: the contradictory or antinomical conclusions of the systematic analytics of self consciousness. Hegel concluded that this 'unhappy consciousnes' of the skeptic or cynic had to be overcome by reidentification with an all encompassing totality, and in doing this becoming infinite in our finitude. In this context Hegel raised the issue of the death of God several times in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807).[5] He had stated this already at the end of 'Believing and Knowing' that was published in the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* of 1802. This urged some commentators to call him the first

[4] Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A biography*, Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 577.

[5] Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*, Bd. 3, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1999, pp. 547/572.

'death of God' theologian.[6] But we have to be aware of the fact that this conclusion was less an existential outcry—as with Nietzsche—than an epistemological necessity.

In Hegel's days atheism was supposed to be disguised as pantheism and for many a critical commentator of Spinoza spinozism was synonymous with pantheism.[7] Hegel owed a lot to Spinoza: 'omnis determinatio negatio est', everything is determined by negation, is a key clause to his systematic exploration of thought. Hegel's interpretation of spinozism as a philosophy that differed from pantheism was thus indirectly politically motivated. As a university professor in the Prussian State Hegel did not like to be unclear about this issue. "Nonetheless, it is quite clear that in Hegel's own mind, the *philosophy* of religion was crucial to his enterprise".[8] Philosophy, not religion was Hegel's project.

Formal-ontologically Being progresses from a given position via negation and contradiction to sublation that positions subjectivity as collective consciousness (World Spirit) on more articulated levels of truth. Self-consciousness of being limited—finite—and the realization of infiniteness through coming to realize that one is always part of all encompassing totality is the bottom line of Hegel's exposition of religious faith. This subject constituting rupture even counts for God. Without man as his negation—Jesus—and the redeemer—Christ—as the upbeat to the Holy Ghost, even God would have been unaware of his existence. This is a rather blasphemous conclusion. It kept haunting Hegel's efforts to ward off accusations of atheism.

At a certain stage of the historic unfolding of the religious truth—or the truth of religion—Buddhism is dealt with. A biographical detail is instructive. Hegel was motivated to lecture on the philosophy of religion after being asked by his former student Hermann Friedrich Wilhelm Hinrichs to write a preface to Hinrichs' book on the philosophy of religion from a Hegelian standpoint. "Hegel used the opportunity of the preface

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[6] See Charles Taylor, *Hegel*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 495.

[7] There is a link between Spinozism and Chinese religion that was used by spinozists who wanted to stay under cover in order not to be accused of atheism. This was for the first time thematized by Pierre Bayle: "Bayle's identification of Spinozism with oriental thought exemplifies a need to come to terms with new and potentially dangerous ideas by locating them in a geographically remote part of the world". See: Thijs Weststeijn, 'Spinoza sinicus: An Asian Paragraph in the History of the Radical Enlightenment', in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 68, Number 4 (October, 2007), p. 561.

[8] Pinkard, *Hegel*, p. 578.

to articulate his basic position on what he saw as the key modern issues in the philosophy of religion and to take some swipes at those who he thought had taken the wrong turn in the debate."[9] He is dealing here with post-Kantian thinkers as Reinhold, Jacobi, Friedrich von Schlegel, and before all Schleiermacher. For the latter the core business of religion is the feeling of absolute dependence. Hegel's polemical and provocative moods and his acidic sarcasm flare up in this text. To shock his Romantic adversaries he compared the feeling of absolute dependence with that of a totally dependent dog that wags its tail when it gets its bone. An enduring academic and personal hostility towards the Romantics influenced Hegel's interpretation of Oriental philosophy.

Since knowing and understanding are Hegel's core business, what sources did he consult for an adequate, up to date understanding of Buddhism? Given the sporadic and biased knowledge that was available in his days, he was relatively well informed and his writings were well-researched.[10] He consulted records of Jesuit missionaries, travel reports and translations of Eastern philosophical texts. He frequently returned to Henry Thomas Colebrooke's *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society for Chinese and Indian history, culture, and religion*. For Buddhism Hegel's main sources were the sixth and seventh volumes of the encyclopedic *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen zu Wasser und zu Lande; oder, Sammlung aller Reisebeschreibungen* that was published in 1750. Next to this encyclopedia the work of Samuel Turner had great influence on his systematic explorations.[11] Turner had visited the court of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. His reports informed Hegel about Lamas or high teachers as reincarnations of previous Lamas, i.e. about humans that—like animals in Hinduism's pantheon—are worshiped as particular beings because they incarnate a universal divine substance. Not as a symbol, but unmediated.

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[9] Idem, p. 498.

[10] As to the subject of oriental religions his main sources are analyzed by Reinhard Leuze's *Die ausserchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 1975).

[11] Samuel Turner, 'Copy of an Account Given by Mr. Turner, of His Interview with the Teshoo Lama at the Monastery of Terpaling, Enclosed in Mr. Turner's Letter to the Honourable the Governor General, Dated Patna, 2d March, 1784,' in *Asiatic Researches* 1: 197–205; 'An Account of a Journey in Tibet' in *Asiatic Researches* 1: 207–220; An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama, in *Tibet: Containing a Narrative of a Journey through Bootan, and Part of Tibet* (London, 1800).

In contrast to Buddhism, records on and texts of Hinduism were already available in the 18th century. From the days of Herodotus, Strabo and Marco Polo historians and explorers had written down their experiences and observations. Due to the long occupation of great parts of India by the British Empire written observations of officials of the East Indian Company determined the view on Eastern religion. Of course their colonial interests biased these observations and influenced their judgment on the ideas and behavior of the indigenous people and their rituals. Images of yogis were printed in travel reports. Because Buddhism was mentioned by John Toland as "the religion of Fo"—the Chinese name for Buddha—Hegel refers to Buddhism also as the religion of the Fo. He is however mainly focusing on Lamaism.

Translations of religious Chinese texts—I Ching and Tao Te Ching—and Hindu texts—Laws of Manu, Bhagavadgītā—were already published in Hegel's lifetime. By that time publications were at hand on the structural relations between Sanskrit and European languages. Franz Bopp's analyses, published in 1816, enabled Hegel to analyze Hinduism more adequately than Buddhism. Yet his knowledge on Buddhism was inaccurate, not being able to distinguish between the different schools of Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna and following his scientific sources in situating Buddha's life around 1000 B.C. This explains his historical estimation of Buddhism as preceding Hinduism. On top of that he mixed up the life time of Siddhartha Gautama—supposed to be only one of many Buddha's—varying from "some forty years before Christ" (L2 24, 308/211) to the introduction of Buddhism in China around 67 A.D.[12]

In contrast to Hinduism Buddhism was less known. This has a 'geopolitical' background too. Buddhism was driven from its homeland in Northern India, as a result of which texts of the dharma were shattered and dispersed across languages as Pali, Sanskrit, Tibetan, and some Chinese dialects. Information on Buddhism became ready at hand only after the exploration of the transhimalayan regions of Nepal and Tibet in the second half of the 19th century. By then systematic insights in linguistic Orientalism had deepened. New research provided both tools and information to acknowledge and evaluate the importance of Buddhism, as was done by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, two fierce critics of Hegel.

[12] Hegel's major source on this is Francis Buchanan's article on Burmese Buddhism in *Asiatic Researches.* Buchanan also suggests the existence of several Buddhas.

So by the time Hegel gave his first series of Lectures in 1824 scientific analyses of Buddhism were not yet vast and far less accurate than in the second half of the 19th century. It was mainly Mahāyāna Buddhism with Hīnayāna elements through the Tibetan Lama accounts of Turner that provided Hegel with information on a particular sect of Tibetan Buddhism: the Gelugpa that was headed by the Dalai Lama.[13]

3. Systematical Incorporation in the System

Notwithstanding the simplistic qualifications by critics of Hegelian thought as to the forced incorporation of all available knowledge into his dialectical system, sequential reading of the different versions of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religions* bears witness to the fact that he 'updated' his knowledge and diversified positions continuously. In retrospect his categorization of Buddhism might seem inadequate, but given the limited and biased knowledge that was available to him his inquisitive shifting and rephrasing show a keen awareness of aspects that still are relevant today. However, his philosophy was still metaphysically rooted in the Western tradition that emphasizes Being rather than Becoming, and interprets Nothing as a privation of Being. Hegel's evaluation of the Eastern notion of emptiness is influenced by this tradition. In the final foundation of his systematic philosophy in *Science of Logic* the notion of Nothing appears at the very beginning as the negation of absolute Being. This Being is historically anchored in the texts of Parmenides. Its negation—Nothing—leads to the systematic conclusion that the contradiction between something instead of either being or not being is first and for all an instance of becoming: growth and decay, progress and decadence, these are all manifestations of this dialectical configuration. Becoming is historically anchored in the philosophy of Heraclites. But how is Nothing situated historically? That is where Buddhism enters the world stage as a methodologically necessary, transitional state of mind.

References in Hegel's Other Texts

In order to pinpoint and evaluate Buddhism's positioning it is instructive to briefly locate Hegel's incorporation of Buddhist's thought in the publica-

[13] This the main thesis of Morton's article. Within this specific perspective Buddhism turns out to be a mixture of asceticism with a limited philosophical view of the absolute as the Void, shot through with xenophobic superstition. See §§ 3 and 8.

tions that precede the period of his Lectures on philosophy of religion. In a long chapter on religion at the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) little details about Oriental philosophies can be found. The chapter (b) on the 'Religion of the plant and the animal', in which he refers to ideas and rituals of the Indian Hindu-religion, is systematically positioned between the religion of the light in Persia (a) and that of creation by craftsmen in Egypt and in Greece (c). Buddhism is not mentioned.

In the first publication of *Science of Logic* (1812–1816) a reference to Buddhism is made in a remark added to paragraphs in Book I: the Doctrine of Being. As already referred to, there is no equivalent for the fundamental notion of Nothing in the European history of philosophy. In referring to Buddhism Hegel can instantiate the Nothing as an articulation of the Void or Nothingness found in Buddhism: "As we know in the Oriental systems, principally in Buddhism, nothing, the void, is the absolute principle."[14] But this Void—Hegel refers to it with this English term—is voided of any subjectivity. There is no discursive self reflection. Negativity has come to a standstill in Buddhism. At the very end of Book I in the paragraphs on Measure a new remark is added in the second edition of 1832 on the relation between Spinoza and Hinduism and Buddhism within the context of pantheism. I will return to this remark at the end of my exposition of the Lectures.

In the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* the exposition of Oriental Philosophy is a prelude to Western philosophy that was inaugurated by the Pre-Socratics. Hegel mentions Confucius, the I Ching, and Daoism as elements of Chinese Philosophy. Under the heading of Indian Philosophy he deals with the Samkhya-philosophy and the philosophy of Gautama and Kanade. Samkhya is one of the six schools of classical Indian philosophy, categorized under Hinduism but originally a Buddhist doctrine based on a dual ontology: the dialectical tension between *purusha* (consciousness) and *prakriti* (phenomenal realm of matter). The dialectical force of Oriental thought—Chinese philosophy with its duality of yin and yang, the Trimurti of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva in Hinduism—must have intrigued Hegel, because it was proof for his dialectical insights in the formal-ontological foundation of the World and of History.[15]

In 1827 Hegel reviewed Humboldt's book on the Bhagavadgītā in the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. "We must now recognize in regard

[14] See *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London/New York: Humanities Press, 1969/2002, p. 83.

[15] See for the following passage Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. 11, pp. 131–204.

to Hindu mythology that it does in fact contain these basic determinations of the concept, the development of the concept. This trinity is the basic form, the abstract basic form of spirit; this is what the Hindus represent as Trimurti" (L2 24, 327/230). For Hegel this is the ultimate proof of the universal validity of his dialectic ontology. Hegel even qualified Gautama's philosophy of Nyaya, i.e. a 'method' of reasoning and investigation, as 'a very articulated dialectic.'[16] And he refers to Kanada, a Hindu sage who lived either around the 6th or 2nd century B.C., and who founded the philosophical school of Vaisheshika. Kanada developed a theory of physics, based on *dvyanuka* (biatomic molecule) and *tryanuka* (triatomic molecule). His belief that all living beings are composed of five elements—water, fire, earth, air, ether—strongly suggested a transition to Eleatic thinkers and Pre-Socratics.

In the second and third edition of 1827 and 1830 of Hegel's *Encyclopedia* (1817) references are made to animal worshiping in Indian religion and to the reincarnation of lamas within the context of atheism and pantheism. Hegel cites from the Bhagavadgītā in an 1823 published Latin translation by the writer, literature critic and translator August Wilhelm von Schlegel (1767–1845), brother of the earlier mentioned Friedrich von Schlegel. He lets Krishna explain the omnipresence in all beings, which enables him to sort out some misunderstandings on spinozism as pantheism. A reference to Colebrooke's remark on Indian religion as being monotheistic due to the abstract universality of the Brahman principle is valued in a typical dialectical turn of phrase: "this positioning is not incorrect".[17]

In sum, we may conclude that in Hegel's work Buddhism is sporadically referred to and that the scarcely available information initially had to meet the formal criteria of the Hegelian system. Hegel applies internal and external categories. The triad of internal categorization of any religion always contains 1) the metaphysical concept of a divinity, 2) its concrete representation in texts and symbols, and 3) a practical cultus. The external categories are derived from the dialectical division of the *Science of Logic*: Being, Essence, and Concept, but now in the mode of determinateness and finitude. In the Oriental religions—and by implication in Buddhism—Being is therefore qualified as prereflective immediacy or

[16] Eastern thinking already developed a vast tradition of dialectical thinking. Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. 18, p. 164.

[17] Hegel, *Werke*, Bd. 10, p. 385.

undifferentiated substance. The divine substance is completely enveloped in itself, like a toe-sucking 'Buddha'.

In this positing of the in-itself the experience of religion is not yet articulated discursively as for-itself, let alone exhaustively conceptualized, the realization of which finally culminates in full internalization as the in-and-for-itself. Or in terms of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*: Intellectual substantiality is in India the end, while in Philosophy it is in general the true commencement; Intellectual substantiality is the opposite of the reflection, understanding, and the subjective individuality of the European.[18] Oriental religions primarily deal with substance as unmediated immediacy on a practical basis. The Buddhist Truth is fully realized in the act, as is mirrored in Hegel's mistaken choice for the Hindu image. Originally Buddhism lacks institutions, is even anti-institutional per definition given Gautama's resistance against the sophistry of Brahmanic tradition. In short, it also lacks the societal articulations of subjectivity.

4. Revised Series of the Lectures

In Hegel's manuscript only a few general remarks are made on Oriental religions: "in general it is [in] the Orient [that we find this] undivided intuition, this intuition of God *in* all things without distinction; God *is* all things, *hen kai pan*" (M 99/5). Obviously *pan*theism is an issue from the start. Starting with the general category of religion of nature in which man is not yet aware of his free subjectivity and divine power is an asset of human beings, Hegel categorizes Chinese, Indian, Persian and Egyptian religion according to their ability to externalize and internalize the representation of a divine entity. Buddhism remains unmentioned. None of these religions do yet acknowledge the Absolute as free spirit. It is either an empirical entity like the wind, the sky, cows, apes, bulls or human beings or a pure abstraction. Magic as the power of the individual to directly influence nature is negated in the formal objectification of the divine power in Chinese religion that worships human beings, like the emperor and genii (*Shen*). Not as symbols, but in actuality. In Hinduism on the one hand a multitude of beings such as elephants and cows are venerated, but on the other an impersonal metaphysical substance, i.e. a supernatural divine power as Brahman enters the stage of world history.

[18] Hegel, *Werke* 18, p. 167.

Lectures of 1824: Migration of the Soul into the 'Nothing'

This initial categorization is expanded in the Lectures of 1824, which are mainly based on the notes written down by students after the Lectures. Now Buddhism comes to the fore as a transitional stage within the religion of magic that also includes religious consciousness of the African, Eskimo, and Chinese. All these are stepping stones to Hinduism, the religion of fantasy that precedes the religion of the good (Persian light religion) and the religion of the riddle (Egyptian religion). In Chinese religion magic as power over nature is objectified in human beings like the emperor and the spirits or genii. The cultus is embedded in daily life ceremonies, agricultural rites and ancestor veneration. A general power that overrules the emperor is not introduced, because the principle of Heaven (*Tian*) is not yet grasped as a general principle in relation to the power of the emperor. Hegel mainly stresses the institutionalized power of the emperor, positioning him as a prototype of an objectified form of divine power: "Thus in China the emperor's lordship over nature is a fully organized monarchy" (L2 24, 303/207).

Next to this 'secular power' a 'spiritual power' (L2 24, 307/211) unfolds itself. This first formalization is the key stage in the transition from magic to more properly defined religion: "Religion begins here" (L2 24, 305/209). The raw immediacy of magic reflects within itself: "*Prima facie* the advance is that the infinite aspect, the essential aspect, is comprehended in a deeper, more genuine way than heretofore—or that another spiritual moment becomes objective for consciousness, for subjective spirit, [at this stage] as compared with what we have been considering up to this point" (L2 24, 304/208). This objectification constitutes the second phase of religious 'awareness', to use a less articulated term than consciousness: "Thought comes to itself" as "what rests and abides within itself, namely *spirit*" (L2 24, 305/209). Objectification is no longer formal but actual, be it "still immediate, consisting initially in the fact that it is a singular self-consciousness" (L2 24, 306–7/210). Religious substance becomes an affirmative relationship with this power: Being-Within-Self as "*thought* itself, and this is the distinctive essentiality of self-consciousness" (L2 24, 306/209). Consciousness contemplates and meditates.

Hegel then positions Buddhism. It is described as 'the religion of the Fo' (L2 24, 307/211). This religion "comes from China, and in historical fact it is somewhat later than the form in which power is the dominant element" (L2 24, 311/214). Originally, Hegel remarks, Buddhism came from Burma, India and Ceylon, "their God Buddha is venerated as Gautama", "depicted

in the attitude of self-absorption with head bent and arms folded over his breast" (L2 24, 314/217). No toe-sucking yet. Gautama is not identified as the secular person that later becomes the Buddha. He is one of a series of deceased Buddhas that are contrasted with living lamas as the Dalai Lama. The fact that Hindu Brahmans see Gautama as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, explains partly this Hindu image. Then a second shift is made. Chinese, Mongols, Tibetans, Burmese, and Ceylonese all practice a "religion we know under the form of Lamaism" (L2 24, 307/211). As mentioned before, these mistakes reflect the scientific insights of Hegel's days. To him the difference between the Fo and Lamaism is only superficial. Lamaism deals with living people through which the divine power transmigrates, while the Fo is concerned with a (re)capturing of Buddhahood for salvation.

Lamaism practices tranquility, repose and contemplation. "This is where the theoretical attitude begins" (L2 24, 309/211). Practical power and desire are negated by "peaceful being-within-self" (L2 24, 309/212). This cultus has institutional manifestations, but it is individualized since an individual can unify himself with 'theoretical substantiality' whenever he wants. Still a thin discursive line links it to the transmigration of souls as a characteristic of magic religions, but "immortality of the soul (in the broadest sense) is what now for the first time emerges" (L2 24, 309/212). This is not yet spiritual in an objectified way, being encapsulated in "immediacy, i.e., a bodily, sensuous shape" (L2 24, 310/213).

More than the immortality of the soul another doctrine is explored and explained by Hegel: the constituting principle of 'nothing': "However varied people and things may be, there is thus only one principle from which they stem, in which they are, through which they subsist, and to which they revert—this one principle is the nothing, completely unqualified, simple and pure" (L2 24, 312/215). Hegel emphasizes that this 'nothing' should not be understood as not being. He suggests that, since it is purely identical with itself, being thought itself, it is 'a substantive being' (L2 24, 312/215) eternally at rest, free of determinations. The souls do no longer wander "for they become completely identical with the God Fo" (L2 24, 313/215–216). Free of desires the goal is reached as nirvana, being identical with God, but conceptualized as Nothing, as the Void of the *Science of Logic*.

In positioning nirvana this way Hegel implicitly subscribes a Mahāyāna view that he found in the *Allgemeine Historie der Reisen.* Hegel's sources do mention the difference between the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna 'method' of attaining nirvana, respectively by getting free from all worldly misery

and by denying desires in order to attain Buddhahood, but Hegel's treatment of Buddhism does not explore these modalities. Although in retrospect he fails to grasp the specific non-Western articulation of emptiness or the Void, i.e. of nirvana, he does not present 'nothing' as a mere privation of being. Wordings like 'annihilation of self' come to the fore in the Lectures of 1831 which are only known by their publication in an edition of Hegel's works done by his friends shortly after his death.

Lectures of 1827

In the 1827 Lectures, again mainly based on students' notes, Hegel returns to the theme that he, in his student years in Tübingen discussed with Schelling and Hölderlin: one and all, *hen kai pan*. In this series of Lectures Chinese religion of the state is conceived as an intermediate phase. In Hegel's account of how the emperor performs his divine powers he comes to speak of 'the sect of the Dao'. (L2 27, 555/453) This sect was allowed to withdraw in self established monasteries into the mountains in order for the Shen to attain immortality. The principle of the Way (*Dao*) lifts the religion of magic up to the being-within-self that in the next phase of religious consciousness is articulated in Buddhism and Lamaism. An exploration of Daoism, in which Hegel referred to a book on Lao-zi (551–479 B.C.) that was published in 1823 and that deals with the life and speeches of Lao-zi, sets an in between: Dao "is a distinctive god, reason" (L2 27, 548/446–447). Hegel focuses on 'measure' as the core concept of reason, acknowledging Dao as 'the return of consciousness into itself' (L2 27, 557/454). Fo and Dao are not explicitly connected. Records on Chan Buddhism or Zen Buddhism were not yet available.

In this version of the Lectures the religion of heaven (*Tian*) "is acknowledged as the highest ruling power" (L2 27, 548/446) that transcends magic and power but while governing moral conduct is still bound to empirical consciousness. It remains formal and abstract. Referring to the Papal reproach of Catholic orders in China for their inadequate translation of Tian as 'God', Hegel agrees with his sources that "Tian designates wholly indeterminate and abstract universality; it is the wholly indeterminate sum of the physical and the moral nexus as a whole" (L2 27, 549/446). In the final analysis it is still the emperor who rules nature, be it under the guidance of Tian. "The heaven of the Chinese or Tian, by contrast, is some thing totally empty" (L2 27, 550/447). Emptiness is interpreted 'empirically': the Chinese Tian is not populated like the Christian heaven. Emptiness is conceived as a privation, as space in which something is lacking, in short as negation.

A dialectical structure of reasoning always attracts Hegel's attention. In the margin of his notes on the 26th of June 1827 he writes: "It is quite noteworthy that the determination 'three' immediately comes into play to the extent that Dao is something rational and concrete" (L2 27, 558/455), followed by the opening sentences of the *Tao Te Ching*: Dao (reason) producing the One, the One producing the Two, the Two producing the Three and the Three the whole universe. Hegel concludes: "Unless three determinations are recognized in God, 'God' is an empty word" (L2 27, 559/456). Dao stays abstract as long as self-consciousness is not ruptured: "Thus Lao-zi is also a Shen, or he has appeared as Buddha" (L2 27, 560/456). In this way emptiness connects Daoism and Buddhism in Hegel's conclusion.

In this series of Lectures Buddhism/Lamaism is positioned beyond the realm of magic as the religion of Being-Within-Self. Hegel's exposition has become more developed and balanced with Buddhism still preceding Hinduism, but now as an autonomous phase that expands the abstract universality and theoretical substantiality of the Dao and Tian. Buddhism is even "the most widespread religion on earth" (L2 27, 563/460). The tricky topic of pantheism—and by implication of atheism—is gradually woven into his explanation. "Here we find the form of substantiality in which the absolute is a being-within-self, the one substance; but it is not grasped just as a substance for thought and in thought (as it is in Spinoza); instead it has at the same time existence in sensible presence, i.e. in singular human beings" (L2 27, 564/460).

It is against this background that the mistaken image of the toe-sucking 'Buddha' suddenly appears, followed by the statement that "the ultimate of highest [reality] is therefore nothing or not-being" (L2 27, 565/461). In contrast to the 1824 Lectures Hegel now rephrases Buddhist nothingness in Western ontological categories as not-being. This state of being is paradoxically strived for "through ceaseless internal mindfulness, to will nothing, to want [nothing], and to do nothing. (…) Thus the theoretical moment finds expression here: that this pure nothing, this stillness and emptiness, is the highest state; that the individual is [something] formal" (L2 27, 566/462). The individual does not think and as such remains formal and abstract, not yet universal and concrete. Expressions as 'negative mental attitude', 'a merely negative nature' are now frequently used. Once these ontological and epistemological qualifications gather psychological connotations the implied pantheism tends towards atheism, in spite of Hegel's warning that "at first glance it must astonish us that humans think of God as nothing; that must be extremely strange. More closely considered, however, this characterization means nothing other than that God

purely and simply is nothing determinate, is the indeterminate. (…) That does not mean that God is not, but rather that God is the empty, and that this emptiness is God" (L2 27, 567–8/464). The divine being is not lacking anything, but is full of emptiness, to phrase it speculatively.

Connecting Eastern religion via Anaxagoras' rational principle of *Nous* with Western religion Hegel finalizes this historical sightseeing with Schellingian intellectual intuition. He rephrases this as 'intuiting intelligence', in order to emphasize immediacy. This is disqualified as 'a lower level of consciousness' (L2 27, 572/468). The Romantic option indirectly equals Oriental pantheism. Both demand a complementing sublation via representation and conceptuality: "just as the sun sets in the west, so it is in the West that human beings descend into itself, *into its own subjectivity*" (L2 27, 572/469; italic HO). Hegel opposes the Oriental and Occidental way of experiencing, representing and thinking the world with Spinoza as an in between. But once in *hen kai pan*—one and all—'pan' is understood as everything, we should discern between the view that everything is God (*Allesgötterei*) and the doctrine that the All is God (*Allgötterei*). In this shift pantheism becomes atheism, as Jacobi's analysis of spinozism try to argument. But this is countered by Hegel: 'pan' stands for universality (*Allgemeinheit*) and not for collective totality (*Allesheit*).[19]

Hegel sees a parallel between Spinoza's concept of substance and the Oriental principle of unity. However, what is still lacking is a Kantian overdetermination of this substance by subjectivity. Only then the singularity of the individual is united with the universality of God through self reflective particularity. In the dialectical shortcut of a speculative phrase this means that separation unites. Hegel's systematic exposition of this overdetermination of substance by subjectivity as a stepping stone to the unfolding of the absolute idea is the key to an understanding of *Science of Logic*. Oriental consciousness has not yet reached the state of a rupture—for-itself—in which substantial immediacy is objectified in order to be reconciled in concrete universality. Man has not yet come to realize that a necessary negation of God—as if he does not exist—is a precondition

[19] Hegel collaborated with the editor of the first German collected edition of Spinoza's Works, that were published in 1802–03. He compared some French translations. So the impact of Spinoza's philosophy was wrong, but "this is not to say that Hegel had a deep and scholarly knowledge of Spinoza". See: G. H. R. Parkinson, 'Hegel, Pantheism, and Spinoza', in: *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Jul./Sep., 1977), p. 449. Parkinson also accuses Hegel of a very specific interpretation of Spinoza's 'omnis determinatio negatio est' in order to incorporate this into his system.

for their reunion through idealization, conceptualization and identification. Then and only then man *realizes* his spirituality in a twofold way: in understanding it and incorporating it in a self conscious cultus. "But at this point, at the level of nature religion which we are now dealing with, this spirituality is not yet spirituality as such, it is not yet a spirituality that is thought or universal; instead it is sensible and immediate spirituality" (L2 27, 575/471).

Lectures of 1831

Hegel dies in 1831 while reworking *Science of Logic*, lecturing on religion in the summer. This last series of Lectures is published posthumously, edited by his students and friends. Herein Buddhism is once more 'upgraded'. Now Hinduism precedes Buddhism that in its turn is completely focused on the practice of annihilation. Chinese religion has become the religion of Measure. The dialectical triad for immediate religion is redefined as measure (Chinese religion), abstract unity (Hinduism) and annihilation (Lamaism, Buddhism), all categorized under the heading: religions of rupture (*Entzweiung*). Lamaism and Buddhism dissolve the dialectical tension between the Chinese religion of measure and Hinduism as abstract unity. Is a reading of this rearrangement against the background of Hegel reediting *Science of Logic*, instructive?

Measure is qualitatively determined quantity and as such is situated at the end of *Science of Logic*'s Book I: the Doctrine of Being. Measure is the overture to Book II: the Doctrine of Essence. This starts with Essence as Reflection in itself, positing a yet unarticulated Reality as Appearance (*Schein*). All is appearance (*maya*), as is stated in both Hinduism and Buddhism. In Hegel's system Reality systematically articulates itself only to unfold itself at the end of the Doctrine of Essence. This in its turn is the prelude to the very first movement of the Doctrine of Concept: Subjectivity. Then Substance has returned to itself full circle through the contingency of its accidents, the realization of which opened man's consciousness for subjectivized substantiality. Only by now Being has become being *in-and-for-itself*.

Notwithstanding all this the presentation of Buddhism/Lamaism in this last series of Lectures is very brief. But every new phase—Chinese, Indian, Buddhism/Lamaism—is characterized in the very first sentences in terms of pantheism. In the excerpts of the student David Friedrich Strauss, who attended Hegel's last course, and who also coming from Tübingen visited Hegel a few days before his death to share memories, the second chapter

on 'The Splitting up (*Entzweiung*) of the Religious Consciousness in Itself' contains a systematic remark on the relationship between substance and accidents "which are determined as a kind of being that is nothing, as a nullity. (…) All that subsists is this change, and the later thought of as unity is the substantive. This is the Oriental or Spinozist substance" (L2 31, 727/617). The word 'pantheism' has become a key term: "We have now to consider the more specific forms in which pantheism has defined itself as religion" (L2 27, 549/446, footnote 100).

Cross-referring to *Science of Logic* (SoL) of 1832 the controversy on pantheism is indirectly referred to in a newly added remark at the end of Book I on Measure: "In the true trinity there is not only unity but union, the conclusion of the syllogism is a unity possessing content and actuality, a unity which in its wholly concrete determination is spirit". In Hinduism, Hegel proceeds, "this is only to submerge all content in the void, in a merely formal unity lacking all content. Thus Siva, too, is again the great whole, not distinct from Brahma, but Brahma himself. In other words, the difference and the determinateness only vanish again but are not preserved, are not sublated, and the unity does not become a concrete unity, neither is the disunity reconciled". Then the crucial passage is made to Buddhism via annihilation and the lack of subjectivity: "The supreme goal for man placed in the sphere of coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be, of modality generally, is submergence in unconsciousness, unity with Brahma, annihilation; the Buddhist Nirvana, Nibbana etc., is the same" (SoL, 328/29). The nirvana stands for annihilation, for unity with the divine as absolute nothingness.

5. Hegel in Buddhist Perspective: Affirming Emptiness as Plenitude and Suchness Beyond Subjectivity

Did Hegel's analysis and valuation of Buddhism's void as nothingness determine the critical debate on the 'nihil' in the second half of the 19th century? "There can be no doubt that the person who contributed most to the nihilist interpretation of nirvana during the nineteenth century was the German philosopher Hegel. For him, the Buddhist nirvana is simply nothingness…",[20] Kao professor on Japanese Religion Bernard Faure concludes. That is why 19th century scholars like Edgar Quinet called

[20] Bernard Faure, *Unmasking Buddhism*, Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2009, p. 25.

the Buddha the great Christ of emptiness and Ernest Renan disqualified Buddhism as the Church of nihilism. Schopenhauer's critical revaluation of Hegel's views on Buddhism resulted in his philosophical pessimism and Nietzsche diagnosed western culture as inherently nihilistic, trying to overcome this by a revaluation of all values proposing onto-political quasi-concepts as the Overman, Will to Power, and the Eternal Return.

But Faure also recognizes positive elements in Hegel's analysis. Subtle nuances enable the keen reader of Hegel's work to comprehend emptiness beyond mere nothingness.[21] I agree with Faure that the heirs of Hegel are to blame, with Žižek as one of the most recent exponents. They either made a caricature out of Buddhism or transformed Hegel's formal-ontological approach of nothingness into existential, moral and political variations of nihilism. Yet Faure's remark that the Buddhist emptiness "is merely another name for plenitude"[22] needs some explanation. This rephrasing of Hegel's position already prefigures a (Zen) Buddhist interpretation of nothingness and emptiness that reminds us of the experiential focus of Nagarjuna (c. 150–250 A.D.) a monk who developed a view on emptiness he called 'The Middle Way' or 'The Middle Path'. Nagarjuna scorns the isolation of emptiness as a separate phenomenon and its articulation as a concept.

It is evident that Faure's analysis does not imply that Hegel was a nihilist, nor does it disqualify Hegel's systematic philosophy as a proto-form of nihilism. If nihilism means lacking a positive and enduring foundation of the meanings, values and truths that motivate man's actions—positively formulated: stating that the basic value, meaning and truth is the 'nihil'—then Hegelian philosophy is the opposite of nihilism. However, Faure's accusation stands once we acknowledge the influence of Hegelianism, due to the critique it engendered and the basic concepts it provided for disillusioned and anti-metaphysically focused generations of scholars to come. Hegel triggered *ex negativo* a long-lasting debate on nihilism in western thought in different registers: Russian literature, modern philosophy, and postmodern politics.

In order to actualize Hegel's positioning of Buddhism I expose it to a more profound misunderstanding of Buddhist thought. The Eastern

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[21] Morton too acknowledges that "what Hegel actually produces, along with many others, is a sense of a positive nothingness that exists alongside phenomena" inspite of the fact that "he, in strictly Buddhist terms, becomes guilty of the very nihilism he is berating in what he beholds" (§6).

[22] Faure, *Unmasking Buddhism*, p. 25.

reception of Hegelian thought implicitly addresses his understanding of nothingness. Buddhist scholars of the Kyoto school who are famous for their intercultural focus[23] have explored the productive relations between Buddhism and Christian thought from the other side of the divide. Hegel's philosophy was already known in Japan the decades after Japan opened its borders and markets for the West in the second half of the 19th century. But it was the centenary of his death in 1931 that caused a breakthrough,[24] as happened in France under the guidance of Alexander Kojève.[25] The most prominent philosopher who integrated Hegelianism in Japanese thought was Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945). This founding father of the Kyoto school stressed the relational focus of Hegel's thinking and thematized an experiential nothingness.[26] Nihilism was further explored by Nishida's former student Keiji Nishitani (1900–1990) who, after having studied in Germany and having persuaded Karl Löwith to come and teach in Japan, wrote extensively on nihilism.[27] Masao Abe (1915–2006) deepened the insights in the relation between emptiness and affirmation focusing on the suchness (Sanskrit: *tathatā*; Jap. *konomama*) of things. A brief survey of their ideas redirects Hegel's notion of 'emptiness'.

Nishida: Pure Experience in Between of General and Particular

The Mahāyāna concept of 'Absolute Nothingness' (*zettai mu*) is the foundational concept of Nishida's philosophy. Like Hegel Nishida too understands the 'self' in terms of a contradictory identity: it is both A & -A.

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[23] See: Rolf Elberfeld, *Kitaro Nishida (1870–1945), Das Verstehen der Kulturen. Moderne japanische Philosophie und die Frage nach der Interkulturalität*, Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi 1999, chapter 3.

[24] See: Gino Piovesana, *Recent Japanese Philosophical Thought 1892–1996. A Survey*, Tokyo: Japan Library 1997, p. 169.

[25] Kojève proposed a philosophical anthropological reading of Hegel's dialectical philosophy. His courses influenced many a Hegelian critical adept: Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Jean Hippolyte and Jean-Paul Sartre attended his courses. After World War II Kojève unfolded a futuristic vision in which Japanese consciousness and aestheticism played a crucial role in the realization of Hegel's idea of man's ultimate way of living after 'the end of history'. Francis Fukuyama's famous book on this topic refers more to Kojève than to Hegel.

[26] See: David Dilworth, (transl.) *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, by Nishida Kitaro: 'The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview' (Basho-teki Ronri to Shukyo-teki Sekaikan), Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987. Nishida frequently discussed his ideas with Daisetz T. Suzuki, the Zen scholar who would later bring Zen to the West. See: Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970 (orig. 1938).

[27] Keiji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of NIHILISM*, Albany: SUNY Press 1990.

However, for him 'essence' that precedes the rupture between subject and object, is realized—in the twofold meaning of the word—not as a concept but as a pure experience (*junsui keiken*)—a notion he picked up in the work of William James—that cannot be grasped in discursive arguments. When Nishida speaks about pure experience as enlightenment, he has Zen's *satori* in mind. Against this background Nishida, a Zen practitioner himself, defines enlightenment as 'the ultimate seeing of the bottomless nothingness of the self.'[28]

In Hegelian terms, what is problematized here is the dialectical tension between the general and the particular, the one and the many or the whole and its parts. These are tensionally unified in the singular. This however is not a conceptual unison, let alone a notional sublation. For Nishida the one and the many coincide as absolute contradictory self-identity (*zettai mujunteki jiko doitsu*). The Self however is not understood as the unity of consciousness: "In the depths of our selves there is nothing to be found; everywhere is 'nothingness'; instead we find absolute 'unity', by transcending everything related to the self."[29] No-thing or nothingness is not a concept, it is an experience of being fully related to everything and nothing in particular.

There is a metalogical problem as well. For an identity to be truly contradictory one has to suppose that both sides of the logical dichotomy are true, since this is what makes them contradictory. But for Buddhists there is no such assertion. Buddhist thought denies a permanent, self-identical entity through time. Moreover, the totality of all there is is not a thing. Its negation therefore is not a thing either. Just like that of its parts the 'thingness' of the whole—and by implication of emptiness as lack of this substantial whole—results from fixations of ever changing interacting forces on different scales. Teleology does not direct these interactions. The contradiction is ephemeral. Only 'extreme' hypostasized notions of an atomic, unchanging being or deterministic causality might produce a contradiction. Instead of substantial identity—the 'I= not I' in a Fichtean articulation—Nishida stresses the interrelated nature between parts both within individuals and between them as parts of a whole.[30]

Pure experience is the experience of what unites in difference. It is a corporeal experience of embedded relationality, superseding the

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[28] Idem, p. 81.
[29] Dilworth, *Last Writings*, p. 110.
[30] See: Elberfeld, *Das Verstehen der Kulturen*, pp. 110/138 ff.

Cartesian and Kantian dualities of mind-body and subject-object. As 'corporeal' realization—the thinking posture of the toe sucking 'Buddha'—it can only be grasped in spatial terms. The issue in Kyoto Zen Buddhist thought is not time but place. Nishida refers to Plato's *chora*, as the form of all forms that itself in not yet formed, but that is perhaps too metaphysical a comparison. Place or *basho* must be understood beyond the duality of matter and form or the mind-body dichotomy as a physically oriented field of consciousness, a being-in or an inbetweenness.[31]

Nishida's logic of place (*basho*) focuses on form. The Japanese word for form is *kata*. This word also describes the repetitive practice of basis techniques in the martial arts: as a dance of stylized forms that 'flow' without intention from the body of the martial artist. But it too counts for tea ceremony (*cha do*) or flower arrangement (*ikebana*). It is all about finding the proper form in the proper place. For Japanese culture the stylization of form, dissolving intention in direct acting, is crucial. In this experience agency becomes 'acting intuition'. Nishida's logic of place allows him to fuse momentariness and eternity, particularity and universality.

"The crux of the difference between Nishida and Hegel may be viewed as a distinction between process and completion. In Hegel's case, the manifestation of the unfolding (…) is at the same time a witness to its own necessity. (…) Nishida, for his part, is not interested in the dialectical unfolding as such but rather in the actual completion of the process in the place of absolute nothingness."[32] In affirming the radicalized phenomenality of things the 'autonomy' of the field of consciousness is realized.

Nishitani: Emptiness as Plenitude

Nishitani adds a Nietzschean tone to the debate on nothingness. His book on nihilism analyzes different tendencies of nihilism in the West, mainly focusing on Nietzsche's claim that nihilism eventually can become affirmative and creative. This corresponds with an affirmative presentation of emptiness (Sanskrit: *sunyata*; Jap. *ku*) that results from the insight that

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[31] The Japanese word for person is *ningen*, that literally means: being (nin) of the inbetween (gen). This 'relational' constituent is sublated in Hegel's notion of the subject. See: H. Oosterling, 'A Culture of the Inter. Japanese Notions of Ma and Basho' in: Heinz Kimmerle & Henk Oosterling (eds.), *Sensus communis in Multi- and Intercultural perspective. On the Possibility of Common Judgements in Arts and Politics*, Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2000, pp. 61–84.

[32] Maren Zimmermann, " 'Nishida's 'Self-Identity of Absolute Contradiction' and Hegel": Absolute Negation and Dialectics", in: J. W. Heisig ed. Nanzan, *Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, Nagoya: 2006, p. 195.

nothingness (*mu*) in the final instance is a experience of fullfilment. Nishitani too emphasizes the embeddedness of the self: it is rather a nod of relations than a substance. Other Japanese scholars have enhanced this insight by pointing at a constitutive inbetweenness of Japanese culture.

'Nihilism' now is focused on insubstantial connectedness. As no-thing this becomes affirmative once in a continuity of momentary conscious selves the ephemeral 'I' is acknowledged to be the fixation of the flow of unique singular moments. In Hegel's system these 'absolute' positions (*an sich*), posing itself initially as all there is, i.e. absolute, enrich themselves in the process of objectification (*für sich*) and subjectivation (*an und für sich*), a process driven by negativity. To Nishitani the nothing that haunts 'unhappy consciousness' is just a relative nothingness. The absolute individual—to phrase it paradoxically—that arises in an absolute present experiences an affirmative emptiness as plenitude, as being fulfilled in itself and as such being fully present to the world. Of course these phrases appear non-sensical in the light of everyday existence where the 'I' is psychologically evident and pragmatic urgency demands calculated anticipations all the time.

But what is at stake here is precisely the radicality of this everydayness, that is devoid of *Hinterwelten*, as Nietzsche called the totalistic mind frames that Western philosophy produced time and again to ward off the unbearable lightness of being: "Ironically, it was not in his nihilistic view of Buddhism but in such ideas as *amor fati* and the Dionysian as the overcoming of nihilism that Nietzsche came closest to Buddhism, and especially to Mahāyāna". But in the final instance the Mahāyāna point of view on emptiness "cannot be reached even by nihilism that overcomes nihilism, even though this latter may tend in that direction."[33] Adorno acknowledges this at the end of *Negative Dialectics* when he comes to speak about the ineffective overcomings of Nietzsche's nihilism "that was meant differently yet supplied fascism with slogans (...) And yet the lighting up of an eye, indeed the feeble tail-wagging of a dog one gave a tidbit it promptly forgets, would make the ideal of nothingness evaporate."[34]

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[33] Keiji Nishitani: *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, Albany New York: SUNY Press 1990, p. 180.

[34] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 380.

Abe: The Suchness of Things

Nishida's and Nishitani's expositions give us a first clue for an understanding of nothingness in a concrete and affirmative sense. Japanese Zen Buddhism acknowledges, notwithstanding the primacy of appearances, the experiential 'truth' of nothingness that is grasped in a radical affirmation of these appearances. The intentional subject dissolves in 'acting-intuition' that realizes the empty mind or no-mind (*mu shin*). This is not a unarticulated immediacy, but the result of 'form'al training: Zen's active sitting or the unmovable movement in martial arts performs the 'essence' of nothingness. But what does this say about *nirvana*? In his comparative study *Zen and Western Thought* Masao Abe focuses on three problems in Buddhism: the significance of *nirvana* for contemporary thought and life, the idea of purity in Mahāyāna Buddhism and emptiness as suchness.

Abe realizes that the negative connotation of *nirvana* "even occurs in the Buddhist world."[35] He offers six arguments for understanding nirvana 'beyond nihilism' and the last one is, in Hegelian perspective, very instructive: "what significance does nirvana have in regard to understanding the meaning of history?" Recalling the momentariness history has no begin and no end: "eternity manifests itself in the here and now."[36] The emphasis shifts to the now and here as "the realization of nirvana."[37]

As for the purity, Abe criticizes the 'third position above and outside the process' from which purity is objectified and conceptualized. Purity is not the counter-concept of impurity. It is the ground from which an objectified opposition can arise. Indirectly criticizing Hegelian dialectics, Abe states that purity is not the sublated enlightenment as an end, on the contrary: it is the unsaid 'ground' of our existence as a whole. 'Original purity, however, is not a state which is objectively observable, but is *realization* . . ."[38] This is the corporeal and spatial realization of emptiness in the Mahāyāna sense that was grasped by Nishida through a logic of place.

Nishitani's analysis of emptiness as fullness is further specified by Abe: fullness manifests itself as the suchness (Sanskrit: *bhuta tathatā; Jap.: kono no mama*) of things. But "everything is just as it is" implies that "every-

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[35] Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought*, William R. Lafleur (ed.) Hampshire/London: MacMillam Press LTD 1985, p. 205.

[36] Masao Abe, *Zen and Western Thought*, p. 215.

[37] Idem, p. 214.

[38] Idem, p. 220.

thing is different from everything else. And yet while everything and everyone retained their uniqueness and particularity they are free from conflict because they have no self-nature."[39] Exit dialectics. This sounds a bit weird, but this insight shows perfectly how historicity and objectification are nullified in the realization of emptiness. The fullness of emptiness realizes itself once the unique suchness—the as-it-is-ness—of things is affirmed in the non-willing of an individual. In objectifying matter Western thought aims at manipulating it as an object that in the very act of objectification constitutes the subject. It pretends to change things progressively in order to realize completion. In doing this it instrumentalizes the suchness of things. "How can we overcome this fundamental restlessness and return to suchness? To do so is the *raison d'être* and essential task of religion."[40] At this point Abe reminds us of the metaphor of the snake swallowing its own tail as a symbol of eternity, of a full circle. But this image also reminds him of emptiness in as far the self tries to grasp itself, as the toe sucking Buddha: "Through the death of ego-self, no-self is realized". "This is because the realization of suchness is the positive aspect of the realization of Emptiness."[41]

In the strict sense nihilism now has to do with fullness and suchness. This is far from being the nihilist interpretation that states that the subject is imprisoned in senseless nihility as to the values that regulate his behavior. Acting still has an axiological focus. Even political categories as solidarity can be applied to the Buddhist perspective—at least in the Buddhism of the Middle Path of Nagarjuna—where enlightenment implies the salvation of all others: compassion validates actions, even after the end of history. It is the active dimension of an ontology of relations. As a radical inter-est—being in between—this action is however beyond calculation.

6. Conclusion: Avoiding the Subject

Of course the presentation of the Japanese Hegel reception is far more complex. According to some critics, in spite of all quasi-mystical double talk Kyoto school's discourse is implicitly enacting the rupture of subjectivity: "Nishida, by insisting on a 'contradictory identity', has embraced the

[39] Idem, p. 223.
[40] Idem, p. 224.
[41] Idem, p. 226.

very 'object logic' abandoned by the Buddhists as well as by modern Western philosophers such as Nietzsche, James and Derrida. (…) The irony is that Western figures such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, James and Derrida have tried to develop a methodology to attain what, in effect, Nishida calls a 'logic of the East' by abandoning the very categories that Nishida resurrects from more traditional Western philosophy."[42] This is an interesting observation, even more interesting once we realize that at least three of these Western thinkers were significantly influenced by Eastern thought. When we also take into account that Nietzsche, Heidegger and Derrida explicitly criticized Hegel, this complex intercultural web of ideas might give us an indication of new dimensions of contemporary 'nihilism'.

While Žižek is 'tarrying with the negative' in order to reinstitute subjectivity,[43] French philosophers of difference—next to Derrida also Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze—revitalize nihilism from within by articulating an affirmative 'nihil' in their respective oeuvres. They focus on the now here as nowhere, circumscribe the implosion of time and space in quasi-concepts as 'event' and 'singularity' that respectively break with the past-present-future chronology and the logic of particulars and universality. This all started by deconstructing Hegel's philosophical edifice, inspired by Nietzsche and Heidegger, in the 1960's. Once sublation of contradictory forces to a higher identity is deconstructed, what is left is a field of differences and webs of relations. In deconstructing universal claims these philosophers of differences, literally, a-void the subject, showing that it is a fixation within a field of forces, articulating differences and relations. They explicitly have found inspiration in Buddhist philosophy, an inspiration that can easily be traced in their texts over the years.[44] This urged some commentators to label Derrida's deconstruction as a differential logic, comparing it with the Buddhist logic of *sunyata*.[45]

The most explicit affirmative presentation of the 'nihil' beyond subjectivity can be found in the work of philosophers that are as severely criticized by Žižek as the Neo-Buddhists: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guat-

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[42] David Putney, 'Identity and the unity of experience: A critique of Nishida's theory of self', in: *Asian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1991, p. 141.

[43] Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative. Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, p. 218.

[44] References to Zen-texts, Japanese culture and oriental practices vary from casual remarks to more systematic elaborations. See: Henk Oosterling, 'Scheinheiligkeit oder Heiligkeit der Schein. Subjektkritische Beschäftigungen mit Japan', in: *Das Multiversum der Kulturen*, Heinz Kimmerle (ed.) Amsterdam/Atlanta: Rodopi Elementa 1996, pp. 103–122.

[45] Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend*, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1984, p. 89.

tari. Deleuze's affinity with Buddhism is made explicit in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962). He redefines Spinoza's immanence as praxis of expression in which Substance is co-existential with the actual and possible expressions of its modes.[46] This 'transcendental empiricism' is further elaborated in *The Logic of Sense* (1969). There the Zen riddle comes to the fore as a constituent 'superficiality' that breaks with the opposition of deep and superficial: "Returned to the surface, the sage discovers objects-events, all of them communicating in the void which constitutes their substance. (…) The event is the identity of form and void. (…) The void is the site of sense."[47] A comparison with Nishida's 'pure experience' as a constituting immanence is at hand. This 'immanence' persists in Deleuze's cooperation with Félix Guattari. In *What is Philosophy?* (1991) they situate "thought-nature, that logic can only *show*, according to a famous phrase, without ever being able to grasp it in propositions or relate it to a reference. Then logic is silent. Paradigm for paradigm, it is then in agreement with a kind of Zen Buddhism."[48] There is "no doubt that the Orient thought, but it thought the object in itself as pure abstraction, the empty universality identical to simple particularity."[49]

Is there still an all encompassing whole from which all particulars are 'sensed'? In one of his lasts last texts, Deleuze refers to Spinoza stating that immanence is not immanence to substance—as Hegel would have it—but that substance and modes are in immanence: "We will say of pure immanence that it is A LIFE, and nothing else". Life is singularized as a life, yet this is all encompassing. "It is not immanence to life, but the immanent *that is in nothing* is itself a life". Life is a transcendental field, that can only be grasped through its immanence. "A life is the immanence of immanence, absolute immanence (…) to the degree that is goes beyond the aporias of the subject and the object that Johann Fichte, in his last philosophy, presents the transcendental field as *a life*, no longer dependent on a Being or submitted to an Act—it is an absolute immediate consciousness whose very activity no longer refers to a being but is ceaselessly posed in a life."[50]

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[46] See: Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, New York: Zone Books 1997 (orig. 1968).

[47] Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, London: Continuum 2001 (orig. 1969), p. 155.

[48] Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, London/New York: Verso 1994 (orig. 1991), p. 140.

[49] Deleuze & Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 94.

[50] Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence. Essays on A Life*, New York: Zone Books 2001 (orig. 1995), p. 27. My italics.

THE RELIGIONS OF PERSIA, SYRIA AND EGYPT: THE TRANSITION FROM THE NATURAL TO THE SPIRITUAL

Herman van Erp

1. Introduction

Hegel's philosophy of determinate religion contains the development of religions as successively more adequate conceptions of God. The essence of religion develops itself logically and historically in conformity to necessary moments. Religion acquires in this process an increasingly adequate concept of itself as a specific form of absolute knowledge. Though the idea of the Absolute Spirit is present from the beginning, its presentation within the immediate religions is still unformed; their level of reflection is simple and misses the depth of speculative thought. Religious thinking moves anyway in the sphere of presentation and is not aimed at rational understanding or conceptual knowledge of its content, which is the task of philosophy. The general truth of the concept of God—the proof that God is and what this means—is considered by Hegel as the culminating point of his philosophy as such and is, as the result from that course, legitimately presumed within the philosophy of religion. In this chapter, I shall give a brief survey of Hegel's conception of the most important religions of the ancient Middle East, except the Jewish one. As I do not have much information about these religions from other sources, I cannot give a judgement concerning the adequacy of this Hegelian conception from a more empirical point of view and I will not discuss whether his approach of these religions is correct. However, Hegel's expositions are in themselves interesting enough for being a rich source for understanding and evaluating the meaning of religious representations of today.

2. The Representations of Natural or Immediate Religion

The subject of the philosophy of religion is how the idea of God develops itself both in respect to the content (in itself) as well to the form (for the religious conscience). "To educe the concept of religion and make it the object of consciousness has been the labour of spirit over thousands of years." (L2 27, 514/412) Logically, this development implies three stages:

a) the starting point of the process, i.e., the not yet developed and therefore abstract principle, which Hegel indicates as the soil (*Boden*) of the religion, its substance or substantiality,[1] b) the genuine process of the development, or the further determination of the principle, c) the result or the end to which the development is directed. The concept of God as spirit belongs to the starting point of the philosophy of religion. Therefore, the whole development is a process of Gods manifestation. Spirit manifests itself in concrete forms and reveals itself for another that can have an inner relationship with it: "Spirit bears witness to spirit. This witness is spirit's own inner nature."[2] This process of becoming manifest for the human mind is the second stage of the development. It is the stage in which spirit is "*activity of self-determining*, of entering into existence, of being for an other, of bringing its moments into mutual distinction and spreading itself out."[3] In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel analyses the development of the human mind in relation to the absolute spirit. In his philosophy of religion, the subject of development is the idea of God Himself: God determines Himself as the absolute spirit in the way He comes out of and returns to Himself through the other (creation, human mind), that can not remain totally different from Him.[4]

The religions of the part *Determinate Religion* are the particular forms in which this development of the idea of God is present in a not only substantive but also subjective way, theoretically and practically, in religious representations and cultus. The *representation* can be called the theoretical or objective aspect of religion; *cultus*, as the elevation of the subject toward God, its practical or subjective aspect.[5] The determinate religions are determined as finite, transitory in principle, and ethnically bound as religion of peoples. The end or result of the progress is universality: the reconciliation of spirit with itself and the other, which will be achieved finally in Christianity. Therefore, Christianity, as *The Consummate Religion*, is placed outside this second part of the philosophy of religion.

It is important to be aware that, according to Hegel, not only the representation of the spirit and the philosophical concept of it pass through this process of development, but God himself as spirit too. Spirit executes its own process of development, is essentially self-realization and takes

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[1] For instance: L1 24, 314/218; L1 27, 444/332.
[2] L1 27, 413/307.
[3] L1 27, 182/90.
[4] L1 M, 228/138.
[5] L1 24, 328/230, 336/237; L1 27, 396/291, 441/330.

particular shapes in this process. God does not remain closed within an abstract unity, but determines Himself necessarily in relation to another, which is distinct from the abstract unity in the original being. The determinate religions differ in the way this otherness is determined and represented. In the natural religions, nearly all natural entities can figure as immediate presentations of the divinity, without much distance or reflection. In this immediacy, there is no room for representations of a positive relationship between God and the other because such a relation presupposes the negativity of a distinction. It is a kind of natural pantheism without reflection concerning the distinct moments of the concept. (L2 27, 532–533/430)[6] On a higher level of development, the religions become conscious of the distinction between nature and spirit and, later on, they develop representations of divine activity as being the origin of this distinction. Those latter representations imply some notion of God in the form of free activity, which is the essence of subjectivity. The idea that God determines Himself in that distinction and that the relationship between God and the other originates from God Himself is lacking within the natural religions. Here, God is not yet represented as a free subject and spirit remains something merely substantial, something abstract like the principle of life, cosmic soul, of which particular entities (natural powers, animals, particular human beings) count as immediate representatives. A contingent natural shape is the sensible form in which that substantiality is immediately present. (L2 24, 379/280) The notion of God as not only a substance but as a free subject is arising in the transition from natural religion to the religions of spiritual individuality.[7]

The idea of God as Trinity is the fundamental idea of Christianity, the consummate religion. Differentiation within and through itself is, according to Hegel, the most essential determination of spirit, as the absolute having a relation to itself through the other. Without this relationship, the absolute remains an empty abstraction, representation without specific content, or—because it cannot be without any content—its content is characterised as spiritless and dead. Hegel criticizes the bent of his contemporary philosophers to deism. A purely subjective religion of mere feeling and inner sensibility is accused for falling back into this emptiness. (L2 27, 569/464–65) "As modern theology says that we cannot know

[6] Spinozism is also accused of pantheism, but is of an entirely different form. For a discussion on this point, see in particular L1 24, 343–344/244; L1 27, 370/269, and 373–377/272–74, also L2 27, 572/469 ff.

[7] This name is used by Hegel in the Lectures of 1824.

God, that He does not have further determinations in Himself, it knows only that he is, as an abstraction without content; and thus, God is faded away into this hollow abstractum."[8] We witness this empty entity in the abstract god *Brahm* of Indian religion (identified by Hegel with Hindu religion), although there it is still accompanied (though very inconsistently) by a motley collection of gods. We shall see that, for Hegel, the religions of the transition are fundamentally different; liberated, that is, from a consciousness that is still captured in the opposition between abstraction and sensibility.

Within religious representations, divine spirit comes to appearance, reveals itself, bears witness of itself to another spirit, even if a particular religion is not aware of this relationship and does not represent the divine as something essentially spiritual. Natural religions are of this kind. The most undeveloped forms of natural religion are not aware of any distinction between the essential content of the concept of God or His substance and the representations, which religion makes thereof for itself. The moments of reflection and self-consciousness have not yet come to a positive form. Therefore, for this religious consciousness, the divinity does not have a necessary form, but may take any possible shape that can be found in nature—necessity being a category of conceptual thinking—, without any question about the adequacy between representation and conceptual content. "Even within natural religions, we will find an elevating of thought above mere natural powers, above the dominion of the natural. But this elevation is carried out inconsistently," the concept of God collapses in an amalgam of representations, a mixture of spiritual and natural powers. (L2 27, 521/418) The abstract and indeterminate character of the notion of God makes it possible to take all kind of natural entities as an immediate expression of it.

3. The Transition from Natural Religion to Higher Levels

A fundamental proposition of Hegel's philosophy of religion is that God can be known, that He has revealed Himself. All religions are the actual proof of it in their representations of the absolute. On this point, Hegel is engaged in a constant polemic against the agnosticism and subjectivism of contemporary philosophers and theologians. In the *Encyclopedia*, he

[8] L1 24, 127/43 (translation H.E.).

compares the opinion that God is unknowable with blaming Him as envious, and in the Lectures of 1827 he says: "When the name of God is taken seriously, it is already the case for Plato and Aristotle that God is not jealous to the point of not communicating himself."[9] Thus, Hegel's approach of religion is to a large extent nourished by a presumed a priori knowledge about the object and essence of religion. He tried to expound the metaphysical concept of religion in such a way that it could explain the development of the determinate religions in the form of both a strongly logical as well historical succession. This schema never succeeded completely, but the theory that the development of religious consciousness passed over from East to West is a constant element in Hegel's approach. The Middle East is considered as the place where natural religion undergoes its transition to the higher forms of spiritual religion. Thus, Hegel's considerations concerning particular religious representations and phenomena are repeatedly interwoven with comparisons that could support the differences in the level of development. Therefore, it is not possible to understand Hegel's exposition of a particular religion without knowing something about the beginning and the end of the process that is determining the development as he understands of it.

Hegel thinks there is also a development at the level of natural religions. Important details in the parallel of the logical and historical development and in the ordering of these religions were changed during the successive Lectures. In the 1831 Lectures the term natural religion is confined to the religion of magic, of which Hegel frequently noticed that it could hardly be considered as a genuine religion, although elements of magic can indeed be found in many religions. The 1831 Lectures treat the religions of East Asia as religions, within which the tension between the finite and infinite is represented and the movement toward the infinite of spirit has started off. 'The cleavage of the religious consciousness within itself' (*die Entzweiung des religiösen Bewusstseins in sich*) is the title, under which these religions there are subsumed and the next stage is called 'Religion of freedom', a category that encompasses the religions of transition. (L2 31, 725/615) Notwithstanding many shifts within the classification, the general structure of a tripartite development, together with its geographic complement, has been maintained, comparable to the distinction between a) natural or immediate religions—an expression used until 1827 for all religions of East Asia—, b) Jewish, Greek and Roman religions,

[9] L1 27, 382/279, cf. *Enzykopädie* (1830), §564.

within which spiritual individuality and freedom are beginning to play an important role, and c) Christianity as the consummate religion.

The religions of Persia, Syria and Egypt, which will be treated in this chapter, belong to the first category, but in the form of a transition to the second. The lecture manuscript of 1821 treats of these religions only incidentally. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the Religion of Light is conceived of by Hegel as the first form of natural religion, worship of plants and animals as the second form; the religion of Egypt is the third form, characterised as the Religion of the Artificer or Foreman (*Werkmeister*, builder of pyramids and temples). Through his labour, the artificer brings, in stone, the external reality together with an obscure inner. Thus, he unites them both in a mixture of the natural shape and the self-conscious form.[10] In the 1824 Lectures, the natural religions are distinguished in four categories: a) magic, including the religions of China, Buddhism and Lamaism, b) the religion of phantasy, particularly the religion of India (Hinduism), c) the religion of the good or the Persian religion of light, and d) Egyptian religion as the religion of the enigma (riddle, *Rätsel*). The transition from Hinduism to the religion of the Parsees is broadly explained as a movement toward an abstract, but physical, unity: light as the representation of spirit in a natural form. The abstract notion of the good (or the light) brings together what was totally dispersed in the former religions and particularly in Hinduism. (L2 24, 351–353/253–254, 381/281) But only the Egyptian religion is explicitly exposed as a transition toward the religions of spiritual individuality (L2 24, 358/259), as the religion, within which substantiality and subjectivity are brought together in a mixture of them both. (L2 24, 381/281)

In the 1827 Lectures, Hegel chooses for another subdivision in four stages, in which the religions of China get their own place. (L2 27, 531–535/429–33) Magic and the religions of China and India are characterised as genuine natural religions. Hinduism is nearly unaltered described as a motley collection of representations, in which notions of unity and universality stay in a totally external relation to concrete reality, which is disintegrating into a multitude of forms and powers. The fourth stage is for the religions of the transition toward the second level, containing the religions of freedom and subjectivity. This stage has two distinct forms in the religions of Persia and Egypt, but in between there is also room for a transitional form, which connects them both: religious representations of

[10] *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Ch. VII, A, c.

the death of God, in which the reality of negation is becoming a moment of Himself. (L2 27, 621–625/514–18) The Lectures of 1831 repeat this subdivision of the first level in four stages, but the last stage is now clearly composed as a group of three different religions, the religion of the good, the religion of sorrow, and the religion of the enigma, which form together the transition to the religions of freedom. Jewish religion is, remarkably, as a kind of counterpart to the Persian religion, subsumed under the religion of the good.[11] We shall take the 1827 subdivision as a guideline for explaining how Hegel characterises the three religions of the transition from eastern to western religion.

The identifying mark of natural religions is that they take a sensible shape as an immediate representation of the spiritual and supersensible. Hegel does not deny that representations of some form of subjectivity may be found frequently in natural religions; the notion of God as spirit is indeed present, but this determination is not essential: natural things count as immediate manifestations of spirit and something divine. This means that the distinction between nature and spirit, or between the sensible and supersensible realm, is not yet present in a form of reflection of the understanding; it does not have yet the meaning of an inner opposition, an opposition of a conceptual character. Therefore, nature and spirit do not pass over into a relationship, but stay together and are mixed in an indifferent way. In these religions, gods frequently take on a human shape, but that is more a contingent fact than a necessary element of the concept of God that they have. The distinction between the subjective consciousness, with its capricious representations, and the objectivity of the concept of God, have not yet come to awareness as well. In the cultus of East Asian religions, unity with God is represented, for example, through a human person like the Emperor, a Brahman, a yogi, the Dalai Lama, who counts as a manifestation of the divinity, but these religions lose themselves just as easily in a multitude of representations that can present the divinity without distinction. Here, God Himself remains indefinite in a high degree, an abstract unity without subjectivity in and for itself. Human beings can indeed appear as representatives or incarnation of God, but God Himself does not have yet the definition of a person. The highest determination of the divinity in natural religion is the notion of

[11] Hegel had apparent difficulties in classifying Jewish religion. Already in his early writings, the religion of light is connected with Jewish religion, and, also in 1824, he mentions a comparison between both of them (L2 24, 389/289). Strangely enough, he gives hardly attention to Islam in the Lectures on religion.

the universe as a living totality or as the universal soul of the cosmos. It is an inadequate concept because it lacks the determination of God as spirit. (L2 24, 267–271/173–76, L2 27, 571–572/468)[12]

4. Religion of the Good: The Persian Religion of Light

Richness and depth, but also the deficiencies of natural religion achieve their climax, according to Hegel, in Hinduism. Opposite or next to each other, we find there the motley multitude of gods in finite shapes on the one side and the idea of an indeterminate unity, of the deity as an infinite emptiness into which all finite and sensible things disappear on the other. Nevertheless, there is no idea of a divine activity as subjectivity, which is itself producing the unity of this all in and for itself. Thus, only the moment of *substantiality* appears in this concept of God, as a pure inner substantiality that does not go in operation and, therefore, does not enter into a relationship with the other. The element of *subjectivity* remains totally external to it. This element is present as well in the unbridled imagination or phantasy as in the strange drive of Indian yogis to escape from the concrete world and to eliminate the subject through extreme subjective performances. However, the yogi tries through complete austerity and extreme corporeal self-control to reduce his entire existence to a state of inward immobility and indifference toward everything and to obtain a state of mind in which he can say that he is Brahma himself. (L2 27, 595–596/490–91) This identification of the subject with the abstract and empty substance, the achievement of a holy, 'deep absorption in nothing' (L2 27, 600/495) is on the other hand from birth (*von Haus aus*) the status of the individuals of one particular caste: the Brahmans. "This means that when a Brahman is born, then a powerful god is born." (L2 24, 345–347/248–49, L2 27, 599/493) The highest top is the abstract thinking, withdrawn in itself. Therefore, Brahmans constitute a class isolated from other people, in the same way as the universal unity is attained by excluding all concrete particular things.

Thinking in this religion is, according to Hegel, not free and does not make free either, because it does not embark on a relationship with particularity, so that it also lacks the power to bring a moral and ethical order in it. (L2 24, 347–351/250–52) In addition, as beings without freedom, human

[12] See also: L1 27, 430/321.

beings have no inner self-worth in this religion; they can only negatively obtain value, through negation of self. (L2 27, 602/497) The transition to the religion of the good is that this abstract emptiness of the universal and infinite is superseded. Freedom of spirit means that it has the capacity to give content to itself, to take on a relationship with the particular, which it resumes in itself without destroying it or vanishing in it.

The concept of the good functions as the first form in which spirit manifests itself as freedom. The good is the universal determinating itself, taking on a particular shape: "a form which is substantial, not only abstract power." (L2 24, 352/254) In the 1824 Lectures, Hegel starts with three further characterizations of this good. Firstly, it can be predicated of finite things such that it is not something from beyond (*Jenseits*), like Brahma. However, on this level of natural religion the good as such does not have itself a specific, determinate content. Especially, it is not a particular end or goal that must be achieved, not a criterion or norm for measuring the goodness of things, situations, events, or actions. Therefore, it must also not be conceived of as wisdom because wisdom presupposes knowledge and choice of ends. In the light of the indeterminate good, all things in their variety are good; the finite things constitute the realm of goodness, without an opposition of good and bad within this realm itself. Secondly, there is an opposition, but an external and abstract one, between this realm of goodness and the realm of evil. Both realms are fighting with each other in a continuous struggle. This struggle between good and evil, therefore, is not the opposition between the infinite or universal and the finite things, but an opposition between two abstract principles. This is the *dualism* of this religion. Although evil, as an abstract principle, cannot be sublated into something positive, the struggle has to take place. The good ought to win, but this remains only an 'ought' because it cannot succeed. (L2 24, 353–354/255) Thirdly, the good has a natural form: light, as the manifestation of spirit. (L2 24, 353–355/255–56) Hegel says several times, without much explanation, that this light must not be understood as a symbol of the good because they are identical. (L2 27, 615–618/510–11) This is in any case an important difference with the representations of the Egyptian religion, which turns all natural things into artistic symbols of something spiritual.

Light is another, and more adequate, sensible representation of the universal quality of spirit than space. Space can be infinite and empty and may function in this way as a representation of pure abstract thinking (like Brahma in Hinduism). Light, however, is a physical universal with darkness as its opposite, in opposition with which it makes itself manifest.

It is as a universal also a unity; as such, it represents the individual universality or singularity of spirit's subjectivity. Contrary to Brahma, light is not excluded from the concrete and real things, but is their soul, bringing them to appearance and life. The essence of the Persian religion of the good is described and understood in this characterisation. The fact that the Parsees give many other shapes to the deity, too, and worship a lot of other natural things, makes no difference for Hegel. We will speak about those different shapes later on. Before that, we have to look at the way Hegel introduces the transition to the religion of the good in the 1827 and 1831 Lectures.

In these Lectures, the step from the East Asian religions toward the religions of Middle East is treated in a more general way. (L2 27, 603–608/498–504) The essence of the Asian religions was the immediate unity of subjectivity and substantiality, consciousness going deeply into itself in a way that the subject was no longer needed: Brahma as 'the inwardly absorbed empirical self-consciousness.' (L2 27, 607/501) This unity must be reached by the subject through an escape from the empirical world, which is placed out of this unity. However, one can say also, that Brahma only exists in the consciousness of the yogi, who has brought himself into this state of mind. The universal lacks objectivity and exists as this finite subject that actually cannot totally empty itself. This contradiction must be resolved. Two points concerning unification and separation determine the next step in the development. Firstly, the externality of the opposition between the real world, with the empirical subject, many powers and determinations on the one side and the transcendent unity on the other is sublated into a true, concrete totality, which is no longer an alternation of origination and perishing. Secondly, the empirical self-consciousness is separated from the absolute, its content, such that God now obtains genuine objectivity. The break between subjectivity and objectivity begins. The content becomes an independent object for the conscious self; it is the concrete totality, unity as a relationship between the finite and infinite. From now on, the objectivity deserves the name God properly. The knowledge of the objectivity of spirit is manifest in the way a people is able to bring religion and social life together into an ethical world. The spirit becomes its known object. (L2 24, 379–381/280–81) There, the subject is no longer the consciousness of an isolated individual like a king, Lama, yogi or Brahman, but a human being as such, as a free member of a community.

God, as the objective content of consciousness, is essentially spirit, even if He may still be represented, on this immediate level, by natural forms.

Light is one of these natural forms; because of its universal, abstract and ideal character, it is a more adequate expression for spirit than particular things, animals or even an individual human being. Therefore, in comparison with Lamaism, where an individual human being from his birth is worshipped as God, Persian worship of light does not mean, for Hegel, a backfall.[13] The break between objectivity and subjectivity makes God essentially to an object in front of man. However, the break is only beginning and not yet completed. Thus, within the religions of the transition, God can have still the shape of natural things, animals and human beings. According to Hegel, these shapes do not have any longer an essential but only a superficial meaning. Objectivation of spirit has started.

Hegel speaks in one sentence of objectivation, distinction, differentiation and resumption. (L2 27, 608/503) Resumption (*Resumtion*) means beginning again: the religious subject does not only resume its normal life, but God, too, leaves the empty space, which also means His contraction out of the motley of representations into an objective, true and universal unity.[14] Chaos and arbitrariness are not passed away, however; the figures of the transition from natural religion to the higher level are still elements within a wild totality. (L2 27, 608/502) This totality has in general two forms: on the one hand, it is portrayed in a pure and simple way, on the other as a 'struggle, the fermenting of these distinct elements into a unity—an impure subjectivity that is the striving toward pure unity itself'. (L2 27, 609/504) Fermentation is the metaphor for the first form, used by Hegel for the religions of Syria and Egypt. The resumption in the first mode of the religions of transition, the religion of the good, is mainly characterised by the simple and pure form of the totality. Its objective content is the universal, in the shape of light. The many representations of the good are harmoniously united in the concept of light. Evil is something external to it, an independent principle. The struggle between good and evil has the form of an abstract dualism.

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[13] Hegel seems to think otherwise in the 1821 manuscript, in which religion of light is considered the first form of natural religion. There, he admits that worship of animals and even of physically present persons is repulsive for us and that we have more sympathy for the Parsees with their religion of light, but he justifies that worship as animals and human beings are figures of greater subjective power than the sun and stars (L2 M, 13–14). Religion of light is here still identified with worship of the sun.

[14] The expression *Resumtion* gets a central role since 1827. Probably, it may also be interpreted in opposition to reincarnation, which is connected with mere succession and, therefore, with dispersion and distroying of individuality.

I wrote above that Hegel put forward, in the 1824 Lectures, three determinations of the good: the world of finite things in their variety, the realm of the good against the realm of evil, and the light as the natural representation of the good. In the 1827 Lectures, Hegel reformulates the first two in three points. Firstly, the good is connected with objectivity, truth and the absolute power of spirit to determine itself as the universal content, without losing its unity. Secondly, this power counts as the origin of all things. The emphasis is not on the multitude of separate things, but on something affirmative, the positive connection and coherence of the finite with the absolute: 'it is not the case that only a subset of them are twice-born, as in India, but rather the finite is created from the good and is good'. (L2 27, 612/506)[15] Thirdly, the good as such remains still an abstract determination. It does not give answer to questions about what we have to do, in what respect something is good. Elsewhere and in other words, Hegel says that the good does not have yet negativity in it; because it does not have an intrinsic connection with evil, it is opposed to it in a merely external way.[16]

The text continues, not very consistently after these three points, with the sentence: "The third determination is that the good in its universality has at the same time a natural mode [...]—light" (L2 27, 614/508). This sentence is an almost literal quotation from the 1824 text. The change of content in the preceding passages is not completed in a totally logical form, but the importance of it is that the emphasis is laid upon the pure positive character of this notion of the good—and so upon its abstractness. The dualism is an external effect of this abstractness and does not belong to the determination of the good itself. The good is the totality that does not accept evil, so that the confrontation never comes into real existence. Indeed, there is struggle between good and evil and the latter ought to be conquered, but—as Hegel smartly retorts—"what ought to be is not. 'Ought' is a force that cannot make itself effective, it is this weakness or impotence." (L2 27, 613/507)

Compared with the power of spirit, it is the impotence of nature, which is manifest in this dualism of light and darkness. According to Hegel, the juxtaposition of distinct determinations or their merely external relation

[15] However, this must not be understood as the concept of a genuine creation, but more as emanation. Creation presumes a more concrete concept of action as an act of free subjectivity. (L2 27, 615/510)

[16] An intrinsic relation of the good with evil is, for example, the moral conscience concerning good and evil, the good as the negation of sin (in avoidance, victory, forgiveness).

is the characteristic of nature.[17] Nature lacks the capacity to integrate the negative in itself and to sublate it. Natural life—nature's highest form of being—is a continuous succession of birth and dying, in which death is not conquered. The dualism also means that darkness cannot be banished completely. Therefore, the idea of God as light or abstract good is still something powerless, having evil as a principle next to it. (L2 27, 616/510) The continuous struggle between good and evil is represented in the personifications of light and darkness as Ormazd and Ahriman. Hegel admits that there are texts, in which Ahriman is conquered ultimately by Ormazd, but puts against it that this "is not expressed as a present state, it is only something future. God, the essence or the spirit, must be present and contemporary, not relegated to the domain of imagination, into the past or the future." (L2 27, 622/515)

Hegel pays little attention to Ahriman, the personification of darkness; probably because this representation does not involve a positive contribution for the development of the concept of spirit. Ormazd is the personification of the highest light, that is 'the energy, spirit, soul, love and bliss' in sensible life. (L2 27, 618/512) He is the personification of substance, which is not yet determined as developed subjectivity, as he represents everything that is life and is worshiped. Ormazd is also the personification of the sun. Therefore, this representation of Ormazd as a person is, according to Hegel, only superficial. (L2 27, 616/511) Other lights like the stars and seven planets have their own personifications, the Amshadspan; they are the companions of Ormazd in his realm of light. At the same time, the Persian state 'is portrayed as the realm of righteousness and good. The king was surrounded by seven magnates, too, who formed his council, and were regarded as representatives of the Amshaspans, just as the king was thought of as the deputy of Ormazd', without being identified with him.

The cultus of this religion is in total conformity with this order: the whole life of the Parsees is cultus and attended to the promotion of life such that the good would prosper and flourish as a light in all regions of nature. (L2 27, 621/514) Also, care for the sick and hungry was part of it. (L2 24, 358/259) The contrast to India is clear: Persian cultus is not an escape from the concrete and particular, but directed toward the affirmation of a cosmos that is good in itself.

[17] Compare the Cartesian definition of matter, as the substance having its parts side by side or separate from each other, in opposition to the unity of thought.

5. Sorrow and Death in the Religion of Syria

Light is the representation of the good, coming from heaven and pouring out over the world, without being affected by evil and never dying. As far as it is determined as subject, this subject is a serene unity without negativity, and therefore not coming back to itself from a point of alienation or otherness that it had to overcome. There is also no idea of reconciliation involved in this goodness. However, according to Hegel's logic, the subject has to take on the confrontation with the negativity in itself because the subject achieves its spiritual freedom through the annulment of its subordination to nature, through the sublation of its natural self. The dialectical development of subjectivity is a struggle with negative powers within the subject itself. This struggle has different moments. On the level of immediacy or the natural state, in which the religions of our discourse are still situated, these moments stay side by side in a time sequence, which the one subject passes through. Thus, the subject has a history, in which it is affected by negative vicissitudes. Death, an evil that hurts the subject in its essence, is the ultimate negative moment of that natural history. The central theme of the religion, which is situated by Hegel as a transition to the next stage of the religion of Egypt, has as its central content the death of God and the story of how He after that returns into a higher, spiritual life. (L2 27, 620–624/514–17) It is only in the 1831 Lectures that this religion is allotted a proper, modest place in the classification of religions. It is the Syrian religion, the religion of the Phoenicians. (L2 24, 369/269, L2 27, 608/503, L2 31, 743/629)

A new principle is realizing itself in the way of life of the Phoenicians, a people of trade and industry: "The human will and activity do have priority here, not nature and its goodness."[18] The biblical prophets detest the religions of their non-Jewish neighbours and describe the cultus of these people as horrible idolatry, in which sensuality and cruelty are rampant. The sacrifice of human beings is explained by Hegel as a proof that, for the religious consciousness that practices this cultus, nature counts as the highest and that human beings as such do not have value. This is totally different in Phoenician culture and cultus.

According to Herodotus, Phoenicians worship Hercules, and Hegel comments, that Hercules becomes a God through human bravery and courage

[18] G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke* in 20 Bände, Bd. 12, Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1970, p. 237.

and passes his life in labour and supreme effort. He is a human God. The same is true for Adonis, who dies as a young man and is the object of a whole cultus of sorrow. Life is renewed and regains its value during the holy days of mourning for the death and celebrating the resurrection of this, to a God elevated, Adonis. Concrete consciousness is working here in the place of the abstract powers.[19]

Stories about dying gods are told in Hinduism, too. But there, death does not have, according to Hegel, the meaning of a negation that penetrates into the essence of the subject. Thus, Khrisna rises again and Indra may die a thousand deaths and live further as a substance without fundamental change. These resurrections lack the meaning of a spiritual victory over natural death. (L2 27, 625/518) The representations of death and resurrection in the figure of the Phoenix, however, the bird that reborns from the ashes of his funeral, and of Adonis, who rises from death three days after his bones are collected, refer to spiritual life as the sublation of natural death.[20] These representations have their place within a cultus of sorrow for life that is passing by, a sorrow that is overcome by joy in the sight of the recovered and rejuvenated life. The Adonis cultus is connected with spring and the change of seasons. The natural course is a symbol, in which the awareness breaks through that the transition of death is a general determination and moment of the absolute itself. (L2 31, 743/629) Death and resurrection are present in all religions, but they are the central theme of the Egyptian religion; a narrow relationship exists between its Osiris cultus and the cultus of Adonis.[21]

6. Egypt: The Religion of the Enigma

The Egyptian religion does not possess the abstract dualism, which was characteristic of the Persian. A concept of power connected with subjectivity replaces the universal concept of the good: the good is endowed with the power of subjectivity. For the first time, subjectivity is manifest in the form of representation. (L2 27, 629/522) This subjectivity is distinguished

[19] Hegel, *Werke* 12, pp. 239–40.

[20] Comparisons with Christian representations are obvious, but Hegel does also his best to make clear why the representations of the resurrection of Jesus, as God's Son, give a deeper insight in the essence of God as spirit.

[21] There is also a relationship with the Mithra cultus, which is originating in these regions. Hegel gives only few attention to it, because he considers the differences as only of historical interest. (cf. L2 27, 629/522)

from a multitude of further determinations, which are not external or alien to it, but over which it is lord and master. These determinations are independent only in appearance, as they become, within this relation of lordship, for the subject its own otherness in a natural, sensible shape. Because of this lack of independency of the other, there is no place for an intersubjective relationship and subjectivity does not yet come to the free development of its essence; therefore, the relationship between subject and substance, between unity and a diverse multitude is still caught in a mixture of inconsequences, of which the subject has to clean and liberate itself. Thus, the representation of the subject remains a riddle, an enigma. (L2 24, 363–365/264–65) Hegel has described the Egyptian religion at length.[22] I can give only the outlines and some interesting details.

The negative is immanent to this subjectivity in different ways and on several levels. (L2 24, 365–369/266–69) On the level of the general concept, divine power has not yet been completely developed into a genuine subject and remains a substance that can be represented in different ways, especially in the worship of animals. On the level of particularity, the good is no longer something abstract, but the specific quality of Osiris, principle of life and the most important god, who has been killed by a real opponent: the god Typhon, his enemy, the destructive principle and symbol of physical evil. Thus, negativity does not remain external to Osiris. Negativity is also connected with the will, the awareness of good and bad, and the choice between them. The subject (God, too) can act, and choose or reject particular ends. The good is connected with ethical life: Osiris is lawgiver, founder of marriage and judge of the souls in the realm of the dead. On the level of singularity, the individual and spiritual subject, who has to liberate itself from its animal (i.e. natural) form, is coming to the fore. It is the human being, who is confronted with his own death and is guided by a notion of rising from it.

The relationship with negativity is, of course, most clear and concrete in the cultus of the dead. Hegel recognizes in it the principle of the negation of negation, the principle of the activity of spirit: death is killed, evil conquered. (L2 24, 368/269) This religion, too, has the representation of the death of God. Typhon defeats and kills Osiris initially, but Osiris lives further as the mighty lord of the realm of the dead. (L2 24, 370/271, 628/521) Thus, also Osiris is twice born, but his second birth has gone through negativity, a coming back to itself in the form of a specific power. The role

[22] Not only in the 1824 and 1827 Lectures but also in other publications and Lectures.

death takes on in this religion is highly esteemed by Hegel, because it is no longer the natural destine of the finite, but a determinate moment in the life of spirit and not accidental to the concept of God. This deep negativity is immanent and sublated in spiritual life, within which spirit is returning back to itself by defeating physical evil and natural death. Here it becomes clear that the dignity of the human being is in law and ethical life. (L2 24, 369–372/270–72)

All religions have representations of God in the shape of a human figure. In natural religions, those figures are natural, sensible, immediately observed creatures, without fundamental distinction between human and animal. In Egypt, consciousness breaks with this immediacy of sensible representations. Egyptian religious art uses an abundance of natural images, but the Nile, the sun, plants, animals and human figures are bestowed with a symbolic meaning, which elevates them above the natural. (L2 24, 632/525) Symbolism in Egyptian art is carried out into the smallest detail. Even the number of columns and steps toward a platform is not determined functionally, but symbolises, for example, the different months or the number of feet the Nile has to rise for the irrigation of the land. The symbol mixes the natural with inner substance, which has subjectivity as its essence, and makes the subject intuitable; it is domination of the natural, inner reality that exists in an external form. The enigmatic sphinx counts, for Hegel, as the ultimate symbol of Egyptian mind: "The sphinx, in and for itself a riddle, an ambivalent statue, half animal and half human, can be seen as a symbol for the Egyptian mind as such: the human head, looking out of the animal body, presents the mind beginning to elevate itself out of nature."[23] The sphinx counts even as the symbol of symbolism itself.[24]

The enigmatic character of the sphinx is that it symbolizes a twofold movement, in which the struggle between inner essence and external form is recognizable: on the one hand

> the movement of the inner, of subjectivity, to liberate itself from the mere natural, on the other hand the drive or impulsion (*Trieb, Drang*) toward intuition and labour.[25] Egypt as a whole is driven toward the expression

[23] Hegel, *Werke* 12, pp. 245–46.

[24] Hegel, *Werke* 13, p. 465.

[25] In the *Phänomenology of Spirit* and elsewhere, Hegel characterizes Egyptian religion as the religion of the artificer (see above, note 13). It is evident that the dialectic of lordship and bondage is present at the backstage of this characterization: in the Egyption religion, the consciousness of the bondsman (servant, labourer), which has shuddered in

> of its spirit in enormous works of art, without achieving complete clarity. Temples, pyramids and other graves cover a hidden realm that does not come to daylight.[26] In a comparable mode, Priests, scribes and embalmers of mummies frequently appear in sculptures and paintings wearing animal masks, which hide the human being as subject. (L2 27, 635/528)

Both sphinx and animal masks can be considered as symbols for the mediation (*Vermittlung*) between spirit and nature, which is characteristic for the religions of the Near East. (cf. L2 24, 359, 259) Mediation is the opposite of immediacy and a break with undeveloped, abstract unity, which is Hegel's determination of the preceding natural religions. It is the necessary activity of thinking, starting from the difference between the moments of a concept and connecting them, without coming already to a complete unification or reconciliation. The mediation in Egyptian religion still has the character of an exterior mixture of the essential elements, in which that what is present and living is intermixed and combined with the idea of the divine. (L2 27, 634/527) Hegel speaks in chemical metaphors about this thinking as a compound of colliding elements and mixture full of fermentation. (L2 24, 370/271, 372/273, 379/280) It is characteristic for a riddle to bring together two elements in a conflicting manner that asks for a solution. The Egyptian way of treating their dead bodies presents also an enigmatic mixture of nature and spirit, of body and soul. Hegel refers to Herodotus, who says that the Egyptians were the first who taught that souls are immortal (L2 27, 633/526), but he himself is reticent concerning this point. Their belief in immortality is moulded in a form of building and labour that is aimed at the retaining of the soul, whereas spirit should liberate itself. Mummification of animals is also an indication that the care for the dead body is not a genuine concern with spiritual life.[27] Egyptian art is the product of this fermentation of spirit; it is a step toward a spiritual relationship with the infinite.

According to Hegel, Egypt is the country of origin of a religious art that fulfils the need for making the subject manifest in representations. That need exists where the natural level of life is sublated (L2 24, 373–375/274–75): "the natural moment must be mastered everywhere in such a way that

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fear of death (the absolute master), breaks with its thing-like, animal life and develops itself, through its own labour, as the actual master of an objective world.

[26] Subjectivity will come to clarity only in the laws and rules that make a people to a political community. (cf. L2 24, 379–381/280–281)

[27] Hegel writes in a short note that the Egyptian realm of the dead is not a spiritual realm because animals and cattle, too, belong to it. (Hegel, *Werke* 11, p. 558)

it serves only for the expression and revelation of spirit." (L2 27, 636/529) The imperfection of Egyptian art is that it remains largely portraying and distortion (*Verzerrung*) (L2 24, 378–380/279–80). However, it has already in itself, especially in its architecture, a craving for the beautiful and for fine art, which is more than imitation, and without dispersion in wild phantasy. (Hegel qualifies Hindu temples and their statues as bizarre, far from beautiful.) Egyptian art bears in itself contradictions, which are connected with the attempt to determine the idea of God in the external shape of an immense architecture, as if God could be produced in a work of art, produced by human beings. Here we find a relationship between spirit and its creation, but not yet reconciliation (L2 24, 375–378/276–78). The fact that the statues of the gods must be consecrated, counts for Hegel as an indication of the awareness concerning the deficiency of the artefacts in representing the divinity. Also, the work of art itself is an expression of this deficiency, because external shape and inner spirit are still separated. The statues have a meaning without being actually animated and spirited. Their meaning is the inner that is longing for coming outward, struggling for expression. For the purpose of illustration, Hegel refers to the difference between the pyramid, which looks like a crystal hiding the soul of a dead person, and a Greek statue of a human body, the external shape in which the inner beauty of the soul comes to expression. (L2 27, 638–639/530)

Conclusion

Egyptian art is the expression of the fermentation of subjectivity, its craving for freedom and beauty. Therefore, Egypt is the transition *par excellence* to the spirit of the Greek. The Egyptian spirit itself remains a riddle, like its language, which, for Hegel, only existed in its silent buildings and enigmatic hieroglyphs (ibid.). The spirit of the Egyptian people is itself an enigma, while in Greek works of art everything is clear (L2 27, 636/529). In Greek representations of human beings and gods, spirit comes to a free expression of itself. The Greek themselves were also aware of this freedom and put this awareness, still naively, in words in the myth of Oedipus, who liberated the (Greek!) city of Thebe from the plague of the sphinx by resolving its riddle. Oedipus gave the answer to the question of the sphinx: what goes first on four, than on two and finally on three legs? The answer to the riddle is man. The content of the enigma, hidden in the Egyptian religion, is the human being, the free, self-knowing spirit. (L2 27, 639/532)

RELIGION IN THE FORM OF ART

Paul Cobben

1. Introduction

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel classifies religion in three stages: *natural religion, religion in the form of art*, and *revealed religion*. In each of the three stages, the godhead is an absolute master that is served by humankind. But the relationship between master and servant is submitted to variation. In *natural religion*, the godhead is an absolute power that leaves no room for human independence. At the level of *religion in the form of art*, the human being recognizes its own essence in the divine essence: man has learnt to understand himself as a free being. However, at this stage, freedom has not yet emancipated itself from nature. Here, freedom only exists as the freedom that is incorporated in natural relations. Spirit and nature shape a harmonic unity. Only at the level of *revealed religion* is freedom understood as the essence of nature: the natural world can become valid as the reality in which the divine freedom manifests itself. Now, man can understand himself as the 'son of god'. He not only recognizes oneself in the divine freedom, but also knows this freedom to be a super-sensual, absolute being that manifests itself in human freedom.

Therefore, the position of *religion in the form of art* is in between: it is the transition from *natural religion* to *revealed religion*. It already expresses freedom, but this freedom is still immediate, i.e., encased in natural relations. For this reason, the development of religion in the form of art consists of freedom's emancipation from these natural relations. In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, the equivalents of the stages of the *religion in the form of art* (the stages of the *religion of the Beauty*) maintain this in between position and, therefore, their development is also aimed towards the emancipation of freedom.[1] However, the systematic elaboration of the development of these equivalents in the *Lectures*

[1] Vgl. W. Jaeschke, *Vernunft in der Religion*, Stuttgart: Fromann Holzboog 1986, p. 208: "Trotz der im Vergleich zu den Vorlesungen unterschiedlichen Methodik zeigen die Resultate [der Religion in der *Phänomenologie*, P.C.] Ähnlichkeit mit den späteren." ("Notwithstanding the methodological differences compared to the Lectures the results (of the Religion in the *Phenomenology*) show equality with the later ones".)

lags behind the exposition of religion in the form of art given in the *Phenomenology*. As a result, my discussion of *religion in the form of art* takes its starting point from the *Phenomenology* and will, now and then, refer to subsequent versions in the Lectures.[2]

Religion in the form of art is already a religion of freedom. Therefore, religion in the form of art belongs to the people who shaped freedom the first time, namely, the Greeks, who created the first form of a democratic state (the polis). The fundamental basis for the existence of religion in the form of art is the ethical world of the polis.[3] The freedom that is practiced in the ethical institutions expresses the divine substance. It is no accident that the name of the city-state Athens is also the name of a goddess.[4] Goddess and city-state coincide. But there is also a distinction: Athens is also represented by a statue. In this sense, the statue can be understood as a copy or 'duplication' of Athens. To understand this duplication of Athens, the immediate form of the freedom of the polis has to be discussed.

2. The Polis as the Immediate Form of Freedom

The city-state of the polis cannot be understood as the expression of a universal concept of freedom (nowadays, we would say, 'as the expression of human rights'), but is bound to a specific, traditional content. Freedom is immediately identified with the specific view of the citizens of a specific city-state. Therefore, Hegel remarks: "On account of this unity, the individuality is the pure form of substance which is the content, and the action is the transition from thought to actuality merely as the movement

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[2] It is conspicuous that Hegel places the Jewish religion, time after time, prior to the religion in the form of art. However, this becomes comprehensible when one realizes that the god of the Jewish religion anticipates the religion in the form of art insofar as it expresses pure freedom, but falls subsequent to it insofar as this freedom does not yet appear in the world.

[3] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, One Volume Edition, edited by Peter C. Hodgson, Oxford 2006, p. 331/535: "Because ethical life constitutes the essential foundation here, what we are dealing with is the initial [mode of] ethical life so to speak, ethical life in its immediacy."

[4] "The *essential* being of the god is, however, the unity of the universal existence of Nature and of self-conscious Spirit which, in its actuality, confronts the former. At the same time, being in the first instance an *individual* shape, its existence is one of the elements of Nature, just as its self-conscious actuality is an individual national Spirit." *Hegel's Phenemenology of Spirit*, translated by A. V. Miller, Oxford: Oxford UP 1977, p. 428. [Hereafter all page numbers referring to this work will appear in parentheses PhSp within my text].

of an insubstantial antithesis whose moments have no particular, distinctive content and no essentiality of their own" (PhSp, 281). It is exactly because of this reason that the polis can be considered as a work of art. The citizen who realizes the laws of the state (the human law) does so by realizing his 'pathos'.[5] The ethical content is immediately experienced by the citizen as the essence of his own freedom. He is not capable of relating critically to this content. Therefore, the content as 'thought', which Hegel speaks about, has the status of an immediate evidence: its content is true because any thought of a possible alternative is lacking. Freedom's immediate shape in the polis, i.e., the freedom practically existing in the ethical institutions, which the citizen realizes in and by his actions, has the consequence that its unity only practically exists and can only come to consciousness in an external way, namely, in the statue of the god. In the statue, the polis is represented by a work of art; it is not brought to its philosophical concept. As the citizen expresses his pathos in ethical acting, so the artist expresses his pathos in the statue of god.[6]

The representation of the city-state's unity as godhead does not explain the religion of art as polytheism. At best, it could be maintained that the multitude of city-states implies the multitude of gods. However, in this case, it would not be clear why those gods are valid for the other city-states.[7] When the drive behind the development of the religion of art

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[5] "The substance does appear, it is true, *in* the individuality as his 'pathos'…" (PhSp, 284).

[6] In *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827* Hegel discusses the activity of the artist: "But the organ by which self-consciousness grasps this subsisting thing, this substantial and essential [being], is phantasy, which images what is initially abstract, the inwardly or outwardly subsisting [essence], and produces it as what first deemed to be a god. Explanation here consists in making it representational, in enabling consciousness to represent to itself something divine" (p. 344/548) A bit further he says: "Insofar as spirit has naturel and sensible existence, the human figure is the only way in which it can be intuited" (p. 347/551–552). *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* II, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1969: "Wie der Gott, obwohl geistige, allgemeine Macht, von der Natürlichkeit herkommt, so muß er auch zum Elemente seiner Gestaltung das Natürliche haben, und es muß zur Erscheinung kommen, daß eben das Natürliche die Weise des Göttlichen ist. Der Gott erscheint so im Stein, und das Sinnliche gilt noch als angemessen für den Ausdruck des Gottes als Gottes" (p. 124). ("As the god, although a spititual, general power, originates from naturalness, he must also have the natural as the element of its incarnation, and it has to appear that precisely the natural is the mode of the devine. Thus god appears in the stone and the sensual still appears as adequate for the expression of god as god").

[7] In 1827 Hegel combines polytheism with the immediacy of the ethical life in the polis. In its immediate form, "the ethical content fragments" and this fragmentation is represented by a multitude of gods. By the way, in *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* II, not the god of the polis, but Zeus is introduced as superior god: "Dagegen *Zeus* ist der

has been understood, it will also become clear why polytheism can have meaning in the single polis.

3. The Internal Contradiction of the Polis

The democratic society, i.e., the society of free citizens, has to solve, in one way or another, the conflict that can arise between individual and community. In principle, the free individual can determine the content of his action. Therefore, it is not trivial that many free individuals can live together in one society. The free action of one does not need to be compatible with the free action of others. Therefore, a free society is only possible if the free action of all can be brought to a harmonic unity. The polis succeeds in this by regulating the action of its citizens according to norms and values that are traditionally given. The citizens realize the morals of the state they are living in. This is exactly why the freedom of the polis has an immediate form. It is true that the actions of the citizens are free because the content of these actions is not imposed by nature; it is a traditional, human made content. But as traditionally determined, this freedom limits itself to the specific historic form in which human freedom can appear. Therefore, the harmony of the polis is only possible as long as this restriction is respected. The pure free self, the self that has the ability to determine its action purely from out of itself, has to be distinguished from the real free self, the self that has given its action a specific historical content. The harmony of the polis can only exist if the pure self has been repressed in some way or, at least, gets no validity. The solution of the polis is the banishment of the pure self to the underworld.[8] As long as this banishment is effectuated, the harmony of the polis is not threatened. However, the pure self refuses its definitive confinement in the underworld. This is expressed in the development of the polis that can be characterized as the return of the repressed. The freedom of the pure self is the implicit presupposition of the polis. The pure self will invade the public domain of the polis step by step. Ultimately, the pure self can claim its place as the formal person. If this occurs, however, the polis is destroyed.

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politische Gott, der Gott der *Gesetze*, der Herrschaft, aber der *bekannten* Gesetze, nicht der Gesetze des Gewissens" (p. 104). ("Zeus, however, is the political god, the god of the *laws*, the power, but of the *known* laws, not the laws of Conscience".)

[8] *The Lectures of 1827*, p. 332/536: "The ethical is an objective content such that a subjectivity or this internal reflection is not yet present."

The development of the polis immediately reflects itself in the *religion in the form of art*, in which the self-consciousness of the polis is represented. Without the threat of this decline the polis would be in perfect harmony and the motive to represent this harmony would be absent. This changes when the harmony is in danger. "Since the ethical nation lives in immediate unity with its substance and lacks the principle of the pure individuality of self-consciousness, the complete form of its religion first appears as *divorced* from its existential shape"[9] (PhSp, 425).

Apparently, the religious representation has a double meaning. On the one hand, the representation already expresses the decline of the polis, for the religious consciousness is a manifestation of the principle of pure singularity. Without the emergence of self-consciousness, there would be no need for religion. On the other hand, the decline of the polis can be delayed when its absolute essence is represented by the religious consciousness. The religious representation contradicts the actual decline. For the religious consciousness, the polis still has an absolute essence, even though the facts show otherwise. Here, religion functions as an ideological consciousness, which is dedicated to the status quo.

In contrast with the development of *natural religion*, the development of *religion in the form of art* does not express itself in distinct religions and distinct forms of society. Rather, *religion in the form of art* concerns the internal development of one and the same religious form. At the same time, this development presents itself as an unavoidable destiny and does not have the self-conscious form characterizing *revealed religion*.

4. The Work of Art within the Practical Framework of the Polis

Before going into the development of *religion in the form of art*, it is advisable first to dwell upon Hegel's view of the work of art and its practical meaning in the polis. How can the work of art express the self-consciousness of the polis and why can this representation contribute to the delay of its fall?

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[9] "Indem das sittliche Volk in der unmittelbaren Einheit mit seiner Substanz lebt und das Prinzip der reinen Einzelheit des Selbstbewußtseins nicht an ihm hat, so tritt seine Religion in ihrer Vollendung erst im *Scheiden* von seinem *Bestehen* auf" (PhdG, 490/1). The English translation is obviously wrong. The point is not that the religion is divorced from the ethical substance, but that the religion only gets existence when the polis threatens to become ruined.

First, we have to know how Hegel understands the 'work of art'. Of course, the work of art is a *work*, which means it is a remaining product of human labour. What specific conditions, however, make the work a work of art? The first condition to distinguish a work of art from other works has to do with the content of that work. The content of the work can refer to other entities. A house, for example, refers to an individual who wants protection against hostile forces of nature. Or, a hammer is a labour product that itself refers to labour and the resulting product. But the content of the work of art only refers to itself. The work of art represents the absolute being, or at least an absolute being. In this sense, the work of art has a religious meaning.

This determination of the content of the work of art, however, is still insufficient. Old Egyptian mummies or the paintings in the pyramids, which are images of the gods, are also labour products with an absolute content. But they are not works of art in the strict Hegelian sense of the word. According to Hegel, the real work of art only appears in the Ancient Greek world because, in that world, for the first time, the riddle of the sphinx was solved.[10] In the Greek world, man has manifested himself as the absolute essence. The absolute being has been identified as human freedom. Only a work that represents human freedom can rightly be called a work of art.

This conclusion, however, leads to a problem. If the work of art has to express human freedom, then the polis itself must be considered as the work of art *par excellence*. In this case, it becomes problematic to understand the reason and meaning behind representing the polis in *another* work of art. Why can the duplication of the polis in another work of art accomplish what the polis itself cannot, namely, a delay of decline?

From a certain point of view, the polis is, indeed, the perfect work of art. It is not only a work that embodies human freedom, but it is also the only existence of this freedom. Freedom has no other mode of being. To be free means to be a citizen of the polis. To be a citizen of the polis means to be free. There is no way to be free outside the polis. The citizen has no conscience or subjective identity to differentiate between his public and subjective role. In this sense, freedom only exists insofar as it is practically performed. Any reflection on this freedom, any subjective

[10] PhSp, 423: "But the work still lacks the shape and outer reality in which the self exists as self; it still does not in its own self proclaim that it includes within it an inner meaning, it lacks speech, the element in which the meaning filling it is itself present."

notion of the citizen about the fact *that* he is free, would destroy the specific sense of freedom that is meant here. The polis would no longer be substantial, for its substantiality would be denied by subjective thinking. This means, in other words, that the polis, as a work of art, is the exclusive medium for this type of freedom to appear in. The polis is, in this sense, the ultimate society of artists.

But, once again, if the polis is such a perfect work of art, why are other works of art needed to represent its absolute essence? To answer this question, we must consider the specific difference between the polis as a work of art and other works of art. The difference is obvious. The citizen is immersed in the polis. He is part of its substantial reality. As a consequence, he is not able to relate himself to the polis as such. This is not the case where other works of art are concerned. The citizen can relate himself to other works of art as defined objects, i.e., as objects that can be distinguished from the objective totality, from the polis. Therefore, other works of art more adequately express the absolute being when the polis is threatened to decline. The threat of decline originates in the moment that the concrete reality of the polis is disturbed and the citizen develops a specific and external relationship to the polis. For the citizen, this externality means that the polis is no longer the absolute being. This loss of the polis' absolute status can be undone by a work of art, which is not only an alternative representation of the absolute being, but which also incorporates the specific relationship of the citizen to the polis. If this specific relationship is part of the representation of the absolute being, it can appear as an *absolute* relationship, which is no longer a menace or threat to the stability of the polis. In the next paragraph, I will clarify this with an example.

5. How is a Specific Work of Art Capable of Delaying the Inevitable Destiny of the Polis?

A provisional answer to this question has already been given. In the specific work of art, the specific relationship of the citizen to the polis is represented as an absolute one. But how can a specific work represent an absolute being? Is not the work of art a human-made product? Moreover, the specificity of the work of art not only expresses its distinction from other specific works, but also obviously refers to the relationship of the citizen to the polis. Is not this relationship better expressed in conceptual terms? Is not the sublation of the work of art announced by the

observation that it expresses a specific relationship? And how can we understand that a specific work of art expresses a specific relationship?

Hegel characterizes the work of art as the individualisation and representation of the general spirit (PhSp, 426), i.e., of the ethical spirit of the polis. What exactly does this mean? If the general spirit can be represented, its absolute content must in some way be open to duplication. The work of art is a representation because its own content refers to the absolute content of the polis. To indicate this duplication, Hegel uses the term "pathos." This term shows up for the first time at the level of the ethical world, when Hegel discusses the objective reality of the polis. "The substance does appear, it is true, *in* the individuality as his 'pathos'…" (PhSp, 284). Apparently, pathos is the absolute ethical content insofar as it is experienced by the citizen. Here, there still is no question of duplication in the strict sense. The work of art still is the polis itself. It is only by means of the individuality that the polis is a living entity. Therefore, a distinction has to be made between the absolute content as the content of the individuality and the absolute content itself. The two distinguished sides, however, do not have their own mode of being.

It is at the level of religion in the form of art that Hegel uses the term 'pathos' for the second time. Here, the term has a negative meaning. As the pure form of the self, the individuality has lost all content. This loss, however, is no emancipation, is not yet liberation from substantial ties. The loss of the absolute content is experienced as an absolute emptiness. Or, rather, the absolute being is experienced in the mode of its total absence. This time, the negative, formless, but absolute content is called pathos. It is the pathos of the pure self in which all form has been concentrated. The pure self relates itself to the formless essence, as "the pure activity." "This pure activity, conscious of its inalienable strength, wrestles with the shapeless essence. Becoming its master, it has made the 'pathos' into its material and given itself its content, and this unity emerges as a work, universal Spirit individualized and set before us" (PhSp, 427). This makes clear in what sense the work of art is an individualisation of the general spirit. Individuality has been the pure form of the absolute substance itself. Individuality and substance, however, disintegrate and are transformed into the relationship between the pure self and its pathos. The specific form of this relationship is objectified in the specific form of a work of art. Since the work of art gives a renewed and positive reality to the absolute content as well, the work of art can be characterized, indeed, as the individualisation and representation of the general spirit.

We can now deduce the promised example from the most immediate relationship between the self and the substance. The primary condition for thinking a relationship between both these terms is their mutual distinction. If the self experiences itself to be distinguished from the ethical substance, the substance loses its absolute status. The specific form of the relationship between self and substance is that they are purely distinct. Therefore, the substance can regain its absolute status if this form can be objectified in a work of art. The work of art we are looking for is identified by Hegel as the statue of the god and the temple, the house of the god. The statue of the god is an idealized human being and represents, in Hegel's interpretation, the citizen. The ethical substance, from which the citizen has separated himself, is represented by the temple.[11] The temple is the world of the god, like the ethical substance is the world of the citizen. However, it is essential that the god and the temple are two distinct works. The result is that the relationship between self and substance is represented as an absolute one. The harmony, which was broken by the separation of the self and the substance, has been retrieved because the self has its own substance in the statue and the substance has its own form in the temple. The substantial unity of the polis has been broken into the moment of the self and the moment of the substance. But because both these moments are, each for themselves, represented in a work of art, the distinction between them is sublated in the representation. Both works represent the absolute substance. Therefore, their distinction is actually no distinction at all. The works express a specific *logical* relationship, namely, the relationship of *stoicism*. For the stoic consciousness, there is only one form, one λογος, which is both the law of nature and the law of the self. Therefore, there is no real distinction between nature and self. Correspondingly, the statue and the temple are both forms of one and the same absolute substance. Thus, there is also no actual distinction between them. They represent, to recall a quotation I mentioned before, "the movement of an insubstantial antithesis whose moments have no particular, distinctive content and no essentiality of their own" (PhSp, 281).

[11] "The first mode in which the artistic spirit keeps its shape and its active consciousness farthest apart in the immediate mode, viz. The shape *is there* or is *immediately* present simply as a *thing*. In this mode, the shape is broken up into the distinction of individuality, which bears within it the shape of the self, and of universality, which represents the inorganic essence in reference to the shape, its environment and habitation" (PhSp, 427).

The statue and the temple, however, are not the only works that represent the ethical substance. The ethical substance of the polis is a composed unity that is internally structured by a multitude of moments. It will turn out that all these moments will be represented in a work of art. The differentiation within the religion in the form of art, i.e., its distinction between a multitude of works, can only be understood if the constituting moments of the polis are explicated. Therefore, the harmonic unity of the polis has to be analysed. In the next paragraph, this analysis begins with the situation in which the decline of the polis seems to be totally absent: there is harmony that seems to need no religion to maintain itself.

6. The Starting Point: The Harmony of the Immediate Ethical World

Obviously, in the harmonic point of departure of the polis, the pure self fails to appear in the public domain. Hegel expresses this with the curious sentence: "As yet, no deed has been committed" (PhSp, 279). Of course, this does not mean that Hegel accepts the possibility of a society in which all deeds fail. Here, 'deed' has a specific meaning (that can be distinguished from action). *Deed* does not imply the casualness of traditional norms and values that are simply lived. Through a deed, the casualness is broken through, notably because its legitimacy is disputed by other deeds.

To gain insight into the Greek world in which no deed in this pregnant sense has been fulfilled, we must look closer at the systematic place Hegel attributes to the Greek world within the development of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel designates the Greek world as "the true Spirit," which is "self-supporting, absolute, real being" (PhSp, 264). Hegel adds: "All previous shapes of consciousness are abstract forms of it" (PhSp, 264). All forms of the appearing consciousness preceding Hegel's discussion of the Greek world are abstractions from the substantial reality of this world. Therefore, the Greek world has to be understood as the concrete totality of all forms of the appearing consciousness. This means that all moments developed by Hegel in the first chapter of the *Phenomenology* (Consciousness) are part of the concrete reality of the polis. When the polis is considered according to these moments of Consciousness, it appears as the society in which "no deed has been committed." Consciousness relates to reality as one that is given sensorially. Consciousness tries to formulate general, theoretical knowledge about this reality and, ultimately, knowledge in accordance with laws. Therefore, the reality of free action remains out of sight of Consciousness.

The first moment of Consciousness is the sense-Certainty. It tries to grasp reality as one that is immediately sensorially given. Evidently, the Greek world, as historical, is sensorially given too. But, in so far as the sense-Certainty cannot grasp its reality as a unity, forcing Consciousness to make the transition into Perception and Understanding, the unity of the polis escapes the multitude of ethical relations in which it appears so that, consequently, Perception and Understanding must be understood as moments of the polis. Perception's "[t]hing with many properties" can be found again twice: as the unity of the family appearing in the multitude of family members and as the unity of the state appearing in the multitude of citizens. Understanding appears in the laws underlying the unity of the family and that of the state: the law of the family (or the divine law) and the law of the state (or the human law). The distinction Hegel makes at the level of Understanding between the first and the second law of Understanding (PhSp, 96) returns in the polis. From out of the objectifying perspective of Consciousness, the law of the state appears as the "eternal" law, remaining the same (the first law of Understanding). From out of this objectifying perspective, the law of the family (whose further development we will see later) appears as the second law of Understanding: "*like* becomes *unlike* and *unlike* becomes *like*" (PhSp, 96). As the supplier of citizens, the family is the presupposition of the law of the state. To fulfill this position, it must make the unlike (the natural individuals) like: it must educate the natural individuals to citizens. In this way, the like becomes unlike: the natural individual is split up into the natural individual and the citizen.

From the perspective of the Consciousness, there is no question of deed in pregnant sense, indeed. The content of the law of the state and the goal of education are fixed. This changes, however, if the polis is considered from the perspective of Self-consciousness. From this perspective, the law is not something given in reality, but is grounded in a pure self. In the second chapter of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel develops the conditions under which the pure self can really exist. It exists not in relation to the natural reality that is immediately given (s. *Desire*), but only within the framework of society. He expresses this societal order in the metaphor of the master/servant relation.[12] The pure self can only be real as servant, i.e., as the servant of the societal order, which is the master.

[12] Translated as: "Lordship and Bondage."

In this context, it is not necessary to develop elaborately the transition from the pure self into the master/servant relation (Lordship and Bondage). We need only to understand that the basic thought underlying the master/slave relation is an Aristotelian one. Man is a free being because he is able to produce a second nature. The state is the reality in which not the laws of nature are valid but the laws posed by the people themselves. Therefore, the submission to the state (the serving of the master) is not a submission to a foreign power, but an act of freedom: it is self-submission to free human essence.

It is important not to understand the master/servant relation as a historical relation, as an act of recognition that leads to the constitution of a societal order. Rather, the relation is an explicitation of the being of the pure self. The reality of the pure self can only be understood in relation to an objective reality that can be considered as self-expression of the pure self: it is a state order recognized by the self as the expression of the self's pure essence. Moreover, it is of importance that Hegel shows that this recognition presupposes that the servant has experienced the fear of death. This experience must also not be understood as factual in time (i.e., as if there is first the experience of the fear of death and, consequently, the decision to submit as servant). Here, again, the experience is an explicitation of logical presuppositions. Without body the pure self cannot be real. This, however, does not imply that the self is determined by its body—this would destroy its purity. Therefore, the pure self must not only experience that it is explicitly distinguished from its body, but also that it can express itself in its body. Hegel combines the experience of the distinction between the pure self and the body with the fear of death. In the fear of death, the self experiences its body in the power of an absolute master (death), so that it is no longer in the power of the pure self. Precisely because the body is caught in a foreign power, the pure self can experience it as distinguished from itself. Therefore, the fear of death is not an experience that shows what it means to die. Rather, it is a kind of victory over death. In the fear of death, the pure self experiences itself to be with itself because it distinguishes itself from its body as such. The pure self learns to understand itself as the body that is brought into the unity of the concept. As this pure concept, the pure self is not mortal itself.

At the moment the body dies, it seems to be disproved that the pure self is the essence of its body (and other nature). The certainty that the pure self was thought to have was only a subjective, internal certainty that, in the end, is refuted by the facts when it comes to the point where the pure self is not able to express itself as the essence of its body. This changes,

however, when the pure self knows its essence to be represented by the master. In the master, the pure self is recognized as the absolute ground of society. This recognition is practically expressed if all serve the master as servant, i.e., if all express the law of society in their actions. Then, the pure self gets an institutional, immortal body in the organism of society.

The master/slave relation is transformed in the relationship of *stoicism* when the servant can identify himself with the master. The cultivation the servant has undergone in his serving has resulted in a reality that no longer seems to have secrets for the servant. The distinctions in the servant's thinking seem to coincide immediately with the distinctions of reality. In his thoughts, the servant supposes to have become immediately the master of reality. It is exactly this form of *stoicism* that characterizes the consciousness of the citizens in the polis, as long as "no deed has been committed." At this stage, actions have not been developed into deeds in the pregnant sense: "the action is the transition from thought to actuality merely as the movement of an insubstantial antithesis whose moments have no particular, distinctive content and no essentiality of their own" (PhSp, 281). In this acting, the pure self disappears behind its historical expression in the specific historic law of the polis.

7. Return of the Suppressed: The Divine Law as Expression of the Pure Self

Although the actions of the citizens according the Human Law of the polis are free (the law is a product of human freedom), this freedom is not yet expressed as such in Human Law. The purity of the free self, the freedom that makes it possible to realize oneself in many ways, remains hidden behind the factual realization in the ruling Human Law. This means that the citizen only appears as an instrument of the state. Ultimately, the state can ask the citizen to sacrifice his life for the salvation of the state. This does not do justice to the inward freedom of the citizen, to his pure self that makes him a member of an absolute, supra-temporal order, which is distinct from the worldly order of the state. This is a blessing for the state because it does not need to fear the subversion of its authority by the pure self.

If the pure self is not expressed at all in the polis, the pure self would be no more than a void illusion. Maintaining that the Human Law is an expression of human freedom would cease to have any meaning. As a result, the law would only exist and could have a natural as well as a

divine origin. The human origin of the Human Law can only be understood if this freedom belongs to the reality of the polis. According to Hegel, in the Greek world, it is not the state but the family that does justice to the pure self.

The family is not dealing with citizens but with real individuals, which it keeps alive and educates to become citizens. Also, these activities seem to have nothing to do with the individual's participation in the pure self. This changes, however, with the death of the individual. For the state, the death of the individual is a relative loss, the loss of one of its many citizens. Conversely, for the family, the death of the individual is an absolute loss. Because the family has to educate its members to their ethical role, it principally does justice to them as free individuals, i.e., as individuals who participate in the pure self. The submission to the ethical role is essentially self-submission.

The absolute loss of the family leads to a process of experience, which is structured like the *Unhappy Consciousness*. The absolute essence of the deceased individual can only be held in the memory of the family and is thus separated from the objective world. This separation denies the absoluteness of its essence. Therefore, the family searches for the dead one in the real world. However, it can only find the body of the lost individual. In its "work," i.e., in the burying of the body, the family tries to reunite the dead body, by sacrificing its corporeality (the body is given back to "the bosom of the earth" (PhSp, 271)), with its absolute essence. This re-union, however, is the result of the family's actions. In its entombing of the dead family member, the family does justice to the pure self of the deceased. This justice, however, gets no place in the real world. The deceased, who is honored by the family, has taken a place in the underworld. Individual and community, the right of the pure self and the right of the citizens of the state, do not need to be opposed. Hegel formulates the deceased's right of entombing as the family's duty, i.e., as the Divine Law that is valid alongside the Human Law.

8. The Abstract Work of Art: The Representation of the Pure Self in the Public Domain

The definite banishment of the pure self to the underworld will fail. The pure and real self are internally united. This internal bond will inevitably lead to the penetration by the pure self of the public consciousness and, consequently, to the undermining of the state's stability. The moments of the pure self, the coming to self-consciousness at the level

of family in a process of experience that was structured in the form of *Unhappy Consciousness*, cannot remain hidden from the public consciousness. The decline of the polis, however, can, for the time being, be postponed because these moments are not expressed in the form of self-consciousness but in the form of representation, i.e., as the works of the abstract art. The moments are represented as absolute works of art that have their own existence beside the statue and the temple that originally represent the harmonic unity of the polis. The pure self that exists for the family beside the objective world (as the subjective memory of the deceased) returns in the public consciousness in the form of the *abstract works of art*.

The penetration by the pure self of the public consciousness is done justice by Hegel when he says that the sculptor does not recognize the activity of his actions in the statue.[13] The sculptor objectifies his pathos in the statue, like the citizen objectifies his pathos in the human law. The pathos of the artist, however, is not identical with its expression in the work of art but also encompasses the moment of freedom. The self of the artist has dissociated itself from its being *immediately* determined by the substance. The work of art is, as we have seen earlier, the result of the struggle between the pure activity of the artist and his pathos. Insofar as the sculptor does not recognize his activity in the work, the work as well as the polis it represents loses its absolute status.

The substance of the polis can regain an absolute representation if the activity of the artist is also represented in the work. According to Hegel, this happens in the *hymn*, the second form of the abstract work of art he discusses. At this level, the god is represented in the medium of the expressed language. In this medium, the work of art remains, in its objectivation, bound to the self. Therefore, the separation between the self and the substance has been avoided. The hymn is not a thing like a statue or a temple which, once produced, keeps the activity of the self outside itself. The hymn only exists in and by the performance of the people. Here, the religious self-consciousness is "*pure thought*, or the devotion whose *inwardness* in the hymn has at the same time an *outer* existence" (PhSp, 430).

The reverse side of this alliance between the existence of the work of art and the activity of the self is that the existence of the work of art

[13] "Since his work comes back to him simply as joyfulness, he does not find therein the painful labour of making himself into an artist, and of creation, nor the strain and effort of his work" (PhSp, 429).

is fleeting. The hymn is, in Hegel's terminology "a vanishing existence" (PhSp, 432). The *work's* objectivity is too much confined in the self and, therefore, "falls short of attaining a lasting shape and is, like Time, no longer immediately present in the very moment of its being present" (PhSp, 432).

Now it becomes clear what Hegel implicitly already indicated by using the term "Devotion." In the hymn, the theoretical moment of the Unhappy Consciousness is objectified. In the hymn, the god is represented as an unchanging but impalpable being. The unhappiness of the *Unhappy Consciousness* is due to the contradiction in which it is involved. Because its 'god' remains impalpable, i.e., it does not appear in the real world, this 'god' is (negatively) determined by the real world and, therefore, is not absolute. To rescue the absoluteness of this 'god', the *Unhappy Consciousness* looks for its reality. Hegel illustrates this search with the example of the medieval crusades that tried to find the reality of god in the holy land. The crusaders, however, only found a grave (no real self has an eternal life). Consequently, the *Unhappy Consciousness* makes a second attempt to reconcile the absolute self with the real world. By sacrificing its real self, it tries to *become* unified with the pure self. If, however, the *Unhappy Consciousness* succeeds in overcoming its real self, the *Consciousness* itself appears to be the absolute essence of the real self.

The development of the *abstract work* is structured in accordance with the *Unhappy Consciousness*: the pure self that is represented in the hymn must be reconciled with the real world. In the *abstract Cult*, the third form of the abstract work, the real self is raised "into being the pure divine element" (PhSp, 433) by ritual actions: "a soul that cleanses its exterior by washing it, and puts on white robes, while its inward being traverses the imaginatively conceived path of works, punishments, and rewards, the path of spiritual training in general, i.e. of ridding itself of its particularity, as a result of which it reaches the dwellings and the community of the blest" (PhSp, 433).

Like the search for the real self that is divine, the attempts of the *abstract Cult* will fail. The ritual actions cannot really change the real self into a divine self. Therefore, a second attempt has to be made in the *actual Cult*, the fourth form of the abstract work. The *actual Cult* is the action that can be understood as a spiritual movement, "because it is this twofold process, on the one hand, of superseding the *abstraction* of the divine Being (which is how devotion determines its object) and making it actual, and, on the other hand, of superseding the actual (which is how the doer determines the object and himself) and raising it into universality" (PhSp, 433/4). The

central action of the actual Cult is an act of sacrifice. On the one hand, the divine Being is sacrificed: "The animal sacrificed is the *symbol* of a god; the fruits consumed are the *living* Ceres and Bacchus themselves" (PhSp, 434). On the other hand, the actual is sacrificed to divine Being: "with the pure *surrender* of a possession which the owner, apparently without any profit whatever to himself, pours away or lets rise up in smoke" (PhSp, 434). The result of these sacrifices is the transformation of the divine Being "into *self-conscious* existence, and the self has consciousness of its unity with the divine Being" (PhSp, 435).

In the unity of self and divine Being, the devotion is "robbed of its outer existence." The Cult replaces this defect and "produces a dwelling and adornments for the glory of god" (PhSp, 435). Once again, it appears that the labour in which the self sacrifices itself for the god ultimately shows that the real self is the essence of god: "the dwellings and halls of the god are for the use of man, the treasures preserved therein are his own in case of need; the honour and glory enjoyed by the god in his adornment are the honour and the glory of the nation, great in soul and in artistic achievement" (PhSp, 435).

9. The Polis as a Harmonic Unity

In the previous paragraph, we saw that the loss of family members resulted in a dialectic movement structured according the *Unhappy Consciousness*. As a result of this movement, the family appeared as the essence of the pure self. The pathos of the family is expressed in the Divine Law. The duty of the Divine Law guarantees that the pure self of the deceased member remains preserved in the memory of the family. In this sense, the Divine Law is, so to say, the institutional house of the pure self that is distinguished from the domain of the state.

The separation between Human and Divine Law seemed to protect the state from the undermining force of the pure self. The pure self, however, is the presupposition of the freedom of the state's citizen. Therefore, the penetration by the pure self of the public consciousness cannot be prevented; this penetration can only be postponed by representing the relation between citizen and polis in works of art, i.e., as the fixed relation between statue and temple. As a product of the artist, however, the work of art also presupposes the pure self and is, itself, undermined in its absoluteness. To repair the absoluteness of the work, the pure self is represented in its turn as an abstract work of art, structured according the

moments of the *Unhappy Consciousness*. This time, the result of the dialectic movement shows the state as the appearance of the pure self. The pathos of the state (expressed in the Human Law) is no longer separated from the pathos of the family, but is explicitly understood as the realization of the pure self.

Now the polis can be conceptualized as a harmonic unity in which all the moments of *Reason* are objectified. The pure self that is institutionalized in the family relates to the objective world of the state in which it can recognize its own essence. If the relation is theoretically considered, it appears as the reality of the *observing reason*: "What observation knew as a *given* object in which the self had no part, is here a given custom, but a reality which is at the same time the deed and the work of the subject finding it." (PhSp, 276) From a practical perspective, it is the reality of the *practical reason*:

> The individual who seeks the pleasure of *enjoying his individuality*, finds it in the Family, and the necessity in which that pleasure passes away is his own self-consciousness as a citizen of his nation. Or, again, it is in knowing that the law of his own heart is the law of all hearts, in knowing the consciousness of the self as the acknowledged universal order; it is virtue, which enjoys the fruits of sacrifice, what brings about what it sets out to do, viz. to bring forth the essence into the light of day, and its enjoyment is this universal life. (PhSp, 276/7)

From a totalizing perspective, it is the reality of the *matter in hand*:

> Finally, consciousness of the 'matter in hand' itself finds satisfaction in the real substance which contains and preserves in a positive manner the abstract moments of that empty category. That substance has in the ethical powers, a genuine content that takes the place of the insubstantial commandments which sound Reason wanted to give and to know; and thus it gets an intrinsically determinate standard for testing, not the laws, but what is done. (PhSp, 277)

10. Repression of the Deed: The Living Work of Art

The harmonic unity of the polis is only guaranteed when the citizens commit no deeds in the pregnant sense: Their actions have to be in accordance with the prevailing Human Law. This guarantee fails, however, at the moment that the Human Law is understood as an expression of the pure self. The pure self is basically a free self that is able to commit any action or, at least, actions that are not in accordance with the prevailing Human Law. Therefore, the harmony of the polis is dependent on restric-

tive conditions that must be imposed on possible actions. These conditions can be specified for the different relations that the free individual can take upon himself towards the polis, i.e., they can be specified for the different moments of the objectified Reason that compose the polis. We will see that these conditions are represented in the *living* and the *spiritual works of art*.

In the *living work of art*, the first moment of the objectified Reason, i.e., the *observing Reason*, is represented as an absolute, everlasting relationship. At this level, the statue is unified with its precondition, the pure self, and has developed into a "living statue" expressed by living individuals. The two forms of living art represent, respectively, the Divine and the Human Law as separated entities. In this separation, the external, theoretical relationship between the Laws is reflected, which characterizes the form of the *observing Reason.*

We have seen that the Divine Law is the "house" of the pure self. By means of the Divine Law, the pure self is given an institutional body. The pure self and its incorporation, mind and body, are represented in "the mystery of bread and wine, of Ceres and Bacchus" (PhSp, 438). Ceres stands for the feminine principle of the body: the "*simple* essence as the movement, partly out of its dark night of concealment up into consciousness, there to be its silently nourishing substance; but no less, however, the movement of again losing itself in the nether darkness, and lingering above only with a silent maternal yearning." (PhSp, 437) Bacchus stands for the masculine principle of the mind. As the "moving impulse" he is:

> [N]othing but the many-named divine Light of the risen Sun and its undisciplined tumultuous life which, similarly let go from its [merely] abstract Being, at first enters into the objective existence of the fruit, and then, surrendering itself to self-consciousness, in it attains to genuine reality—and now roams about as a crowd of frenzied females, the untamed revelry of Nature in self-conscious form. (PhSp, 437/8)

The Human Law is the mediated "house" of the pure self, in which its mediated existence as citizen has been given a second nature in the objective institutional body of the state. This mediated unity of mind and body is represented in the athlete of the Olympic Games, the "inspired and living work of art that matches strength with its beauty; and on him is bestowed, as a reward for his strength, the decoration with which the statue was honoured, and the honour of being, in place of the god in stone, the highest bodily representation among his people of their essence." (PhSp, 438) In the representation of the athlete, it becomes clear how the religious

consciousness regulates the actions of the free citizen (and postpones the decay of the polis). The freedom of the citizen remains encased in natural boundaries: mind and body appear as strength and beauty, i.e., as cultivated nature.

11. The Representation of the Deed: The Spiritual Work of Art

At the level of the *practical reason*, however, the citizen cannot accept boundaries that are set by an external, natural world. The *practical reason* wants to relate itself to an external world that it can recognize as the result of is own action. Therefore, this world can only be a social world. This is illustrated by the moments of the practical reason as they appear in the harmonic unity of the polis.

The first moment of the practical reason, *Pleasure and Necessity*, considered within the harmonic unity of the polis, is described by Hegel as follows: "The individual who seeks the pleasure of *enjoying his individuality*, finds it in the Family, and the necessity in which that pleasure passes away is his own self-consciousness as a citizen of his nation." (PhSp, 276) If, however, the individual becomes aware of his pure freedom, he will no longer accept the self-consciousness of the Human Law and will resist it as a strange necessity. Once again, the stability of the polis is threatened. To ward off this threat, the moment of *Pleasure and Necessity* is represented as an absolute relation in the first form of the *spiritual work of art*, namely, the *Epic*.

In the *spiritual work of art*, the representation of the pure self is no longer separated from the representation of its objective expression like in the living work of art.[14] In the spiritual work, the self is represented as the self expressing itself. Therefore, speech is its medium: "The perfect element in which inwardness is just as external as externality is inward is once again speech . . ." (PhSp, 439) At the level of the *Epic*, however, the self that expresses the speech, the Minstrel, is still distinguished from the self that is expressed in the speech. What is expressed is "Mnemosyne, recollection and a gradually developed inwardness, the remembrance of essence that formerly was directly present" (PhSp, 441). Here, Hegel is making reference to Homer's Iliad. In this work, the expression of the self is still the result of the synthetic representation of the minstrel: "It

[14] "In the Bacchic enthusiasm it is the self that is beside itself, but in corporeal beauty it is spiritual essence" (PhSp, 439).

is no longer the actual practice of the Cult, but a practice that is raised, not yet indeed into the Notion, but at first into *picture-thinking*, into the synthetic linking-together of self-consciousness and external existence." (PhSp, 440)

In the Epic, *Pleasure* is represented by human action, i.e., the actions of the heroes. The actions of the heroes, however, are managed by the gods:

> The universal powers have the form of individuality and hence the principle of action in them; what they effect appears, therefore, to proceed entirely from them and to be as free an action as that of men. Consequently, both gods and men have done one and the same thing. The earnestness of those divine powers is a ridiculous superfluity, since they are in fact the powers or strength of the individuality performing the action; while the exertions and labour of the latter is an equally useless effort, since it is rather the gods who manage everything. (PhSp, 441/2)

However, over the many gods hovers the *universal self*, the might of Necessity. "They are the universal, and the positive, over against the *individual self* of mortals which cannot hold out against their might; but the *universal self*, for that reason, hovers over them and over this whole world of picture-thinking to which the entire content belongs, as the irrational void of Necessity . . ." (PhSp, 443)

As long as the universal self of Necessity remains undetermined, it remains unclear how the unity of society can be concretized. Therefore, the empty self of Necessity has to be transformed into the determined law of society. We have already seen how the polis can exist as the harmonic unity of two laws, the Human and the Divine. This harmony is guaranteed insofar as the Divine Laws restricts itself to the underworld so that its action does not interfere with the action of the Human Law, i.e., when "no deed has been committed." In this case, all can accept the Human Law so that there is no need for "the law of the heart" to be revealed as "the frenzy of self-conceit." The law of the heart can be understood as a constituting moment of the harmonic totality of the polis: "Or, again, it is in knowing that the law of his own heart is the law of all hearts, in knowing the consciousness of the self as the acknowledged universal order." (PhSp, 276)

Principally, however, the deed is unavoidable because the pure self of the family and the real self of the polis do not immediately coincide. (Their reciprocal relation has to be developed). This is exemplarily illustrated by Creon's ban to entomb Polynices, who sacrificed the interest of the state for his own interest. The clash between the two laws is postponed because in the *Tragedy* their ultimate harmony is represented as an absolute one.

This appeal to the tragedy seems to be strange because Hegel also describes the "deed" and the decline of the harmonic unity of the polis in terms of the *Tragedy*, in particular, Sophocles' *Antigone*. In the tragedy, however, the clash between the two laws is accompanied by a process that Hegel calls the "depopulation of Heaven." (PhSp, 449) It is this process that, for the time being, can retain the appearance of harmony.

First, the "Chorus of the Elders" representing the people praises a multitude of gods: "Lacking the power of the negative, it is unable to hold together and so subdue the riches and varied abundance of the divine life, but lets it all go its own separate ways, and in its reverential hymns it extols each individual moment as an independent god, first one and then another." (PhSp, 444) The clash between the two laws, however, is reflected in the religious representation:

> If, then, the ethical substance, in virtue of its Notion, split itself as regards it *content* into powers which were defined as divine and human law, or law of the nether and of the upper world—the one of the Family, the other the State power, the first being the feminine and the second the masculine character—similarly, now, the previously multiform circle of gods with its fluctuating characteristics confines itself to these powers which are thereby brought closer to genuine individuality. (PhSp, 445)

Both characters—the actor of the human law and the actor of the divine law—are one-sided: they only know the content of their own law. Therefore, their consciousness is intrinsically connected with the side of not-knowing.

> Therefore, the two sides of consciousness which have in actuality no separate individuality peculiar to each receive, when *pictorially represented*, each its own particular shape: the one, that of the revelatory god, the other, that of the Furies who keep themselves concealed. In part, both enjoy equal honour, but again, the *shape* assumed by the *substance*, Zeus, is the necessity of the *relation* of the two to each other. (PhSp, 447/8)

In the "deed," the one-sidedness of the ethical powers becomes manifest, resulting in the decay of these powers:

> The action, in being carried out, demonstrates their unity in the natural[15] downfall of both powers and both self-conscious characters. The reconciliation of the opposition with itself is the Lethe of the underworld in death; or the Lethe of the upper world as absolution, not from guilt (for consciousness

[15] 'Natural' is the translation of 'gegenseitig'. A better translation would have been 'reciprocal'.

> cannot deny its guilt, because it committed the act),[16] but from the crime; and also the peace of mind following atonement for the crime. (PhSp, 448)

The downfall of the ethical powers is reflected in the completion of the depopulation of Heaven.

> The self-consciousness that is represented in the Tragedy, knows and acknowledges, therefore, only one supreme power, and this Zeus only as the power of the state or of the heart, and in the antithesis belonging to knowing [of knower and known], only as the father of the *particular* that is taking shape in the knowing; and also as the Zeus of the oath and the Furies, the Zeus of the *universal*, of the inner being dwelling in concealment. (PhSp, 449)

Self-consciousness, which has kept Zeus as its only god, has lost its specific content. Zeus has become the representation of the pure form of self-consciousness. Therefore, self-consciousness is no longer able to rescue the ethical substance by sacrificing its self-conscious action. The pure self is explicitly separated from the contingent reality. The third moment of the *practical reason, Virtue and the way of the world*, ceases being a constituting moment of the reality of the polis.[17] Self-consciousness, "the simple *certainty* of self, is in fact the negative power, the unity of Zeus, of *substantial* being and of *abstract* Necessity; it is the spiritual unity into which everything returns." (PhSp, 449/50) This negative power of self-consciousness is represented in the *Comedy*: "The self-consciousness of the hero must step forth from his mask and present itself as knowing itself to be the fate both of the gods of the chorus and of the absolute powers themselves, and as being no longer separated from the chorus, from the universal consciousness" (PhSp, 450).

In contrast to the self of the gods, the self of self-consciousness is not imagined. Moreover, the self of self-consciousness is not dependent on a substantial being: it is only involved in a substantial power insofar as it acts its part by putting on its mask. But the self "quickly breaks out again from this illusory character and stands forth in its own nakedness and ordinariness, which it shows to be not distinct from the genuine self, the actor, or from the spectator." (PhSp, 450) This play between the self of the mask and the genuine self is the exhibition of "the ludicrous contrast

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[16] A better translation would have been 'deed'.

[17] We have already seen how Hegel characterized Virtue and the way of the world as a constituting moment of the polis: "it is virtue, which enjoys the fruits of sacrifice, what brings about what it sets out to do, viz. to bring forth the essence into the light of day, and its enjoyment is this universal life" (PhSp, 276).

between [the self's] own opinion of itself and its immediate existence, between its necessity and contingency, its universality and its commonness." (PhSp, 451)

The self that has emancipated itself from the ethical substance is the free self with the capacity for reasonable thinking.[18] Its gods are no longer coincidental individualities that reflect the divers powers in the ethical world. Reasonable thinking develops the individualities of the gods into the simple Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good in which return, at the highest level of abstraction, the divine and human laws. (In the Beautiful the individual gets a universal meaning and in the Good the community encompasses the interests of the individuals). Insofar as the gods have a natural side, "they are clouds,[19] an evanescent mist, like those imaginative representations." (PhSp, 451/2)

Because of their abstractness, the thoughts of the Beautiful and the Good are empty so that any individual has the opportunity to give them his or her own meaning and make them the result of his or her coincidental, contingent individuality.

> Therefore, the Fate which up to this point has lacked consciousness and consists in an empty repose and oblivion, and is separated from self-consciousness, this Fate is now united with self-consciousness. The *individual self* is the negative power through which and in which the gods, as also their moments viz. existent Nature and thoughts of their specific character vanish. At the same time, the individual self is not the emptiness of this disappearance but, on the contrary, preserves itself in this very nothingness, abides with itself and is the sole actuality. (PhSp, 452)

Conclusion

The *religion of the work of art* is the religion of freedom in its immediate form. It is the religion of the ancient Greek people that has objectified the free self in the polis: the polis is the concrete totality of all moments of the free self. In the immediate form of the polis, however, freedom as such (i.e., the free self in its pure form) is not objectified. The pure self is

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[18] J. Heinrichs, *Die Logik der 'Phänomenologie des Geistes'*, Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann 1974. He thinks that the transition of the Greek religion into reasonable thinking corresponds to the transition from Unhappy Consciousness to Reason, see p. 441. However, we have seen that reason is already represented by the living and the spiritual work of art.

[19] Here, of course, Hegel is referring to Aristophanes' Comedy, *The Clouds*.

the hidden presupposition of the polis. The reality of the polis is only a specific historical form of the polis that exists beside a multitude of other poleis. In the struggle between the poleis, each polis can become ruined. Their decay appears as an external power, as the empty self of Fate. In fact, the decay of the polis is caused by an internal power, i.e., by the penetration of the ethical life of the polis by the pure self.

The development of the polis is the process in which the empty self of Fate is recognized as the pure self of the real individual. The pure self will be understood as the Fate of ethical life. In the end, the only reality is the reality of the contingent self that knows that in its part as *persona*, it is the master of this reality.

The development of the polis is an ongoing learning process that is performed by means of religious representations: all the constituting moments of the ethical life, the moments of the free self, are successively represented by a work of art.[20] This representation mediates a raising of the conscious, which results in the explication of the pure self as the presupposition of the polis.[21] At this point, the decay of the polis is over.

The *religion of the work art* first appears at the moment the pure self of the individual threatens to penetrate the public domain of the polis. The decay of the polis is warded off by representing the relation between individual and community as an absolute and harmonious relation: in the representation of the statue of the god and the temple. The statue and the temple, however, cannot repress the pure self because they only represent the objective appearance of individual and community, not the free activity that is presupposed by them. Therefore, the pure self is represented

[20] Jaeschke, *Vernunft in der Religion*. He interprets the abstract, living and spiritual works of arts as historical stages of the religion of the work of art (see p. 208). Although within the development of the spiritual work of art there seems to be some chronological succession, the religious forms represent the moment of the polis which are real at the same time. Therefore, it is not necessary that the logical development totally coincides with a chronological one.

[21] R. Bubner, "Die 'Kunstreligion' als politisches Projekt der Moderne" in A. Arndt e.a. (Hg) *Hegel Jahrbuch* 2003, *Glauben und Wissen. Erster Teil*, p. 310: "Die Generalformel einer Entwicklung der Substanz zum Subjekt erzeugt in der spezifischen Anwendung auf das Religionskapitel, das wir diskutierten, die Eigentümlichkeit, daß in der griechischen Lebensform das Substantielle eingeübter, weitergereichter und durch Tradition bestätigter Sittlichkeit bereits durch ästhetische Transformation vom Ansichsein zum Fürsichsein emporgehoben ist." ("The general formula of the substance's development into Subject produces, as we discussed, in its specific use in the Religion Chapter the characteristic that in the Greek form of life the substantial of the practiced, passed and by tradition affirmed ethical life is already sublated from being-in-itself into being-for-itself by aesthetic transformation.")

as an absolute being in the *abstract work of art*. The development of the *abstract work of art* results in the *living work of art* in which the representation of the pure self is immediately united with its reality: in the athlete of the Olympic Games, the statue of god has become a living god.

In the athlete, however, the pure self remains embedded in natural relations. It is only at the level of the *spiritual work of art* that the self can be expressed as a spiritual one, i.e., as a self that transcends the natural relations. In the *Epic, Tragedy*, and *Comedy*, the pure self is successively represented as the abstract self of Fate, the self-conscious self of Zeus, who is the only one supreme power, and the pure self of the real individual that understands itself as the Fate of the world.

HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY OF JUDAISM

Timo Slootweg

1. Introduction[1]

Hegel had a lifelong interest in Judaism. He wrote and lectured on the subject repeatedly and on many occasions. The early 'theological writings' (as they are called not quite correctly) are undeniably very critical about the Jewish faith. In the 1827 Lectures, some 30 years later, the critique of Judaism is apparently almost muted. As Hodgson writes: "they carry further the favourable reassessment of Judaism begun in 1824. Gone are all earlier references to 'the fear of the Lord' that is 'the beginning of all wisdom' and to the 'execrations' of Leviticus [...]".[2] Careful analysis of the Jewish idea of God takes the place of the earlier critique, as well as a re-evaluation of the great contribution of Israel to the history of religion: the spiritually subjective unity of God. Hodgson: "it [the subjective unity named 'God'] is in fact the highest philosophical concept; as such, God subsists without sensible shape, only for thought."

In contrast to this somewhat apologetic reading of Hegel, I would like to insist here on not overestimating the differences in the development of Hegel's interpretations of the subject. Hodgson is certainly right that Hegel in his 1827 Lectures mentions briefly 'certain limitations', only at the end of his overall quite 'sympathetic phenomenology of the Jewish representation of God'. However, as we shall see, the limitations that he notices in 1827 are broadly the same as the limitations he mentions and describes more extensively and critically in his early theological work. What then is it that indeed makes Hegel's later treatment of Judaism sound somewhat more sympathetic?

My explanation is quite simple and straightforward: it is mainly the dialectical structure of the Lectures (which purpose is not to *criticize* but

[1] I want to thank Rico Sneller for his valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

[2] P. C. Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction' in: G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, One Volume Edition, Ed. P. C. Hodgson, Oxford: Oxford UP 2006, p. 55.

strictly to develop logically the concept of religion) that indeed makes all the difference for the evaluation, not just of the determinate 'Religion of Sublimity' (Judaism), but also for the other religious forms that precede the Consummate Religion of Christianity. In other words: it is primarily the progressively systematic and dialectical perspective of the mature Hegel that accounts for his notably sympathetic evaluation, in contrast to the relatively non dialectical, 'typological' and critical reflections of his early work on Judaism. It is in comparison to other determinate religions (especially the Greek Religion, the Religion of Beauty), and in the context of the logical development Hegel perceives, that the Religion of Sublimity is shown to be a necessary and rational stage and an indispensable progression towards Christianity in which (eventually) the concept of religion becomes objective to itself.

In the following, I will demonstrate this reading by referring to other, later texts (taken from the *Phenomenology* en *the Philosophy of Right*) in which Judaism or one of its transformations (in Kant for instance, and in Pietism that share in the Jewish fate of Christianity) is at stake. The importance of this simple explanation for the present elaboration of Hegel's view on Judaism is that it makes us aware of (first) the relatively strong continuity in his writings on the subject, and (second) of the unmitigated relevancy of the extensive and very explicit earlier analyses. In fact, they might show us, not just the 'limitations' of Jewish religion in respect to the Hegelian perspective, but also some of the limitations of Hegel's own Philosophy of Religion, and (finally) the inherent danger involved in the *Geist* of his Idealism.

This is why I would like to start here by referring to the brilliant essay 'Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal' (1799) that Hegel wrote when he was only twenty-nine years old. According to Wilhelm Dilthey,[3] the essay is one of the finest texts Hegel ever wrote in his entire life. Jacques Derrida has called this essay, quite rightly, *la matrice conceptuelle*, 'the conceptual womb',[4] of Hegel's mature system. Hegel's later dialectic schema is an abstraction of his contemplation of the nature of love as the spirit of Christianity, which is why it can serve as a excellent introduction to his later thoughts.

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[3] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels*, GS Bd. IV, Stuttgart/Göttingen: Van den Hoeck & Ruprecht 1974, p. 68.

[4] J. Derrida, *Glas. Que reste-t-il du savoir absolu?*, Vol. I, Paris: Denöel / Gonthier 1974, p. 78. J. Derrida, *Glas*, English Transl. J. P. Leavy and R. Rand, Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press 1986, p. 55a.

2. The Spirit of Judaism

Hegel's early work is essentially targeted at an evaluation of religion, the spirit of Judaism and Christianity, with respect to their disposition to produce unity and culture. Like many of his friends at the *Tübinger Stift* (Schelling and Hölderlin) Hegel was very much infatuated by the Greek civilization in which the humane and national religion of Beauty played an important role in the realization and unification of an integral and cohesive ethical life. But at the same time, notwithstanding this sincere admiration, he was already very much aware of the limitations of Hellenism as a relevant example for his own time. Already Plato had struggled in vain to safeguard the beautiful *substantial* unity of Greek culture from the dangers of relativism (exemplified by the Sophists). His solution, based on a philosophy of nature and *theoria*, eventually did not account for the emerging truth of subjectivity that eventually would have to destroy the naive happiness of the Greek. This subjectivity and subjective freedom would necessarily have to develop further and further in history, in the context of Biblical Religion, through Reformation and Enlightenment, up until the time of Kant and of Hegel himself.

It is against the *pantheistic* background of his nostalgic Hellenism of which he is already firmly convinced that, at least in its original form, it cannot and should not even return, that Hegel writes about the spirit of Christianity as it is born out of the theistic spirit of Judaism. Judaism (and Kantianism, because of its spiritual affinity to Judaism) is interpreted as representing a separation of God and nature; it represents a painful separation that is necessary with respect to the spiritual development of mankind. Christianity in turn, is interpreted as the healing introduction of some remaining, viable aspects of the spirit of Hellenism (and its folk religion) into the estranged Biblical religion of the Jews. In short: the teachings of Christ are a synthesis of transcendent Jewish and immanent or this-worldly Greek elements. "It is Hegel's thesis that Jesus teaches pantheism of love which reconciles Greek pantheism with Judaic and Kantian theism."[5]

It is quite telling that Hegel develops his interpretation of love as the spirit of Christianity in flagrant contradiction to 'the loveless spirit of Judaism'. According to Hegel, Christianity arose out of the nothingness

[5] Richard Kroner, 'Hegel's Philosophical Development' in: G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, Knox and Kroner (Eds.), Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1971, p. 10.

and emptiness of the Jewish faith. Although (indeed): "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom", and although it was as such a necessary stage in the development of the spirit (the spirit of unity and 'life'), the Jewish faith is the 'nullity' and the deserted barrenness that preceded the birth of Christianity; which is why Jesus, according to Hegel, had to start completely from scratch. According to Hegel, the Jews brought to mankind nothing but the ugly law and a senseless obedience without joy. Beauty, truth and goodness came from Christ only. These are, in essence, the same limitations that Hegel mentions some thirty years later, in his 1827 Lectures on the philosophy of religion, although his formulations there sound somewhat more sympathetic. Let us therefore follow carefully his analyses of Judaism as he describes them in his extensive and thorough analysis of 1799.

In Jewish religion, Spirit develops in extreme determination *against* nature and against the immediate unity with nature. It is only in relation to this external and merely profane nature that a truthful reconciliation can eventually be realized. As the result of this disenchantment (the *Entgötterung* of nature), people can be seen as individuals, not as divine incarnations. Suns can be seen as suns, mountains as mountains; not as things with a soul and with a will of their own. In the earlier religious forms, the spiritual was still very much restricted by the natural. Nevertheless, a terrible disaster must have ended this paradisiacal naiveté. According to Hegel, the faith of the Old Testament was born from the experience of a terrible flood. This flood must have breached the original and secure mode of living in harmony with nature. The victims and witnesses (Noah) must have interpreted this flood as a cruel instrument of a strange God who used nature to punish mankind for its disobedience to him. Nature is merely an 'instrument' to this God. The God of the Jews does not 'participate' in his creation, and nature has no intrinsic meaning to him. God is an absolute subject, not an object. This divine indifference towards being is mirrored in the way his people experience nature, their own personal nature as well as their neighbours' nature, as signifying absolutely nothing. And this already explains the characteristic urge of the Jewish people to independence, exclusiveness and disengagement.

The first act through which Abraham became the progenitor of the nation was through a brutal act of disseverance (*Trennung*) that snapped the bonds of communal life and love.[6] Indeed, God commanded him to

[6] G. W. F. Hegel, 'The spirit of Christianity' in: *Early Theological Writings*, T. M. Knox/R. Kroner, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1971, p. 185. The original text

leave his land and his natural family (cf. Gen. 12; 1). Later on, this God demanded further proof of Abraham's 'slavish' faith and obedience when he asked him to sacrifice his son. For this God Abraham's *natural*, fatherly love for his son does not mean a thing. According to Hegel, the Jewish need of independence explains their contemporary wretchedness, which is the direct consequence of their stubborn rejection of the spirit of truth, beauty and reconciliation. Hegel compares the fate of the Jewish people with the fate of Macbeth who divorced himself from nature by clinging to these strange and unnatural voices. It is because they brought their sufferings upon themselves, that Jewish history is not in the least comparable to a Greek tragedy. The Jews share the fate of Macbeth who, in the service of alien 'beings' trampled and slaughtered others, as well as (finally) himself.[7]

Much of what Hegel says about the fate of Jewish faith comes down to the restrictions of the Mosaic Law in comparison and in contradistinction with the 'free', *moral* teaching of Christ in his Sermon on the Mount.[8] According to Hegel, the pure divine law is not our salvation but our prison. The rule of law represents a state particular to fallen man. The law is in fact the product of the destruction of the original, friendly unity of life. Through this destruction, life is transformed into an enemy that presents itself only in the form of a divine command. Moreover, although this breach with nature is necessary, if we are not able to transcend this lifeless law, if we are not able to surrender our abstract juridical rights through love, grace and mercy, spiritual life is cursed and lost forever.

Through the promulgation of the divine law, justice is reduced to a formalistic righteousness in front of the law, that is, to simply doing what the law says must be done. In addition, although one can indeed try to be righteous in this way, one cannot possibly expect to be able to *reconcile* oneself with the law as law, with this strange, purely subjective God. In penal law for instance, the administration of punishment does not lead to an internal atonement and it cannot really mend the gap between the law and its subject; that is: between the universal and the individual. Punishment only installs a feeling of impotence in the face of a Lord with whom one has nothing in common and with whom one cannot possibly reconcile oneself. On the other hand, at the moment that the trespasser

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in German: G. W. F. Hegel, 'Der Geist des Christentums' in *Werke* 1, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1986, p. 277.

[7] Hegel, 'The Spirit of Christianity', p. 205/297.

[8] See for Hegel's interpretation of (what he sees as) the purely *moral* teachings of Christ: Idem, pp. 205/297 ff.

comes to understand that he has not simply broken the law (this alien being), but that he has in fact thereby disrupted his own (divine) life and integrity, this feeling will become a longing for what has been lost, and remorse and reconciliation with life can be set to work. Only then the trespass reveals the totality and unity that it has injured, and shows what the trespasser himself is lacking now.

The Jewish law is universal, and only as such is it 'real'. It is nothing more than a mere duty (a *Sollen*) backed by fear and threat, which means that it is the downright contradiction of being (*Sein*). Christian love on the other hand is the *fulfilment* of the law. Without this love, law is just an unnatural and artificial command that comes from an external force with which one cannot reconcile oneself. Through love, law and duty (*Pflicht*) are potentially reconciled with our natural inclinations (*Neigungen*). Through this fulfilment, the abstract law, the law as law is in fact annihilated and made superfluous. The love of Christ liberates mankind from a 'jealous' and ruthless Master who 'presents' himself only through the 'positivity' of his abstract-universal commandments. Through the revelation in the coming of Christ man is liberated from a purely transcendent God, a hidden God who keeps everything to himself and so only enslaves his people. Charity, the neighbourly love between people (friends and foes indiscriminately) is the true embodiment of the eternal love of God on a temporary scale, and it is in this incorporation that we can find the Kingdom of God.

It is not this strange and violent force that moves the individual towards eternity. Instead, it is its own nature and destination. Through the love of Christ, at last one can learn to do good without being coerced; to conform freely and internally motivated, that is: instinctively and emphatically—to the law. Thus Christian love promises to restore man's dismembered life to (what looks like) its original (paradisiacal) integrity.

Because of their iconoclasm and their negative theology, the 'Jews' who stand witness to his message must (for ever) remain blind for its symbolic, eternal content. To the 'typical Jew' the grave is nothing but an empty grave and the message thereof cannot penetrate his hard heart and soul. The Jew turns everything to stone, petrifying and materializing Spirit. To dry Jewish rationalism an individual is nothing more than just an individual, equal in value with every other individual. Even family life is but dutiful fidelity. Judaism (and Kantianism) cannot understand the doctrine of incarnation. For the Jew the Word cannot become Flesh and consequently, Jesus cannot have been the son of God, nor can anyone else ever be. According to Hegel, a Jew is not able to value empathy for his

fellow man as a finite embodiment of the infinite. The spirit of the love of Christ cannot possibly be at home in the dungeon of the Jewish soul ('in dem Kerker einer Judenseele'),[9] nor can it be at home in any 'subjective' philosophy that breathes an equally violent, Jewish atmosphere.

3. Kant

According to Hegel, Jesus delivered mankind from the positivity of the Jewish Law by interpreting the relationship with God on the basis of the purity of the heart, the human will and its natural inclination to do the good. The universality of the law makes it strange and objective. It is a conceptual abstraction of the full life, which is where proper love resides. Love refers to the unity of life in which we can recognize and affirm our duties as inner desires.

After the appearance of Christ (God's loving sacrifice) it is evil simply to continue to labour under the law. However, in the protestant philosophy of Kant especially, the ugliness of Jewish religion returns in a slightly different form. Kants abstract morality is a version of Judaism that prohibits the advent of ethical life. For Hegel Christian love cannot be commanded; it is simply not in accordance with reason to think of a *command* to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself. To Hegel, this means that what sounds like a command is in reality not a proper command at all; it is a command only in respect to its grammatical form.[10] According to Hegel, already Kant must have seen the paradox within the command of neighbourly love. Moreover, like Hegel Kant also sought a way to solve this problem. Nevertheless, the solution he found, his interpretation of the law as an aspect of religion within the bounds of reason, suffers from the same defect as the Mosaic Law. True love is freedom, and freedom is love. However, there is no truth in the commandments of the OT:

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[9] "How were they to recognize divinity in a man, poor things that they were, possessing only a consciousness of their misery, of the depth of their servitude, of their opposition to the divine, of an impassible gulf between the being of God and the being of men? Spirit alone recognizes spirit. They saw in Jesus only the man, the Nazarene, the carpenter's son whose brothers and kinfolk lived among them; so much he was, and more he could not be, for he was only one like themselves, and they felt themselves to be nothing. The Jewish multitude was bound to wreck his attempt to give them the consciousness of something divine, for faith in something divine, something great, cannot make its home in a dunghill. The lion has no room in a nest, the infinite spirit none in the prison of a Jewish soul, the whole of life none in a withered leaf." Idem, p. 265/381.

[10] Idem, p. 212/324.

> Truth is something free, which we neither master nor are mastered by; hence the existence of God appears to the Jews not as a truth but as a command. On God the Jews are dependent throughout, and that on which a man depends cannot have the form of a truth. Truth is beauty intellectually represented; the negative character of truth is freedom. But how could they have an inkling of beauty who saw in everything only matter? How could they exercise reason and freedom who were only either mastered or masters?[11]

To elaborate on the extensive sphere of influence of the Jewish spirituality, Hegel refers to the 'Religion within the bounds of reason alone' (IV, 2, §3) where Kant says that there may be big differences between the Shaman and the European prelates, between the Moguls and the Puritans, but that they all share the same principle of belief. They all obey to external commandments instead of the laws of their own reason, which is in fact what the Bible, with all its symbolism, asks from us. Indeed, in the interpretation of Kant that brings love within the bounds of reason, the message of the commandment becomes very clear. We should obey to the categorical imperative as the ultimate commandment of reason: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Love is a duty to which we obey in the freedom that wells up from the autonomy of our own will. Moreover, I am not obliged to obey to a commandment of which I cannot recognize and affirm the practical rationality.

Nevertheless, for Hegel, Kant's internalization (*Verinnerlichung*) of the Law does not take away its intrinsically 'Jewish', abstract and repressive character:

> By this line of argument, however, positivity is only partially removed; and between the Shaman of the Tungus, the European prelate who rules church and state, the Voguls, and the Puritans, on the one hand, and the man who listens to his own command of duty, on the other, the difference is not that the former make themselves slaves, while the latter is free, but that the former have their lord outside themselves, while the latter carries his lord in himself, yet at the same time is his own slave. For the particular—impulses, inclinations, pathological love, sensuous experience, or whatever else it is called—the universal is necessarily and always something alien and objective. There remains a residuum of indestructible positivity which finally shocks us because the content which the universal command of duty acquires, a specific duty, contains the contradiction of being restricted and

[11] Idem, p. 196/288.

> universal at the same time and makes the most stubborn claims for its one-sidedness, i.e., on the strength of possessing universality of form. Woe to the human relations which are not unquestionably found in the concept of duty; for this concept [...] excludes or dominates all other relations.[12]

In Kantian ethics, man is free and autonomous in the sense that he is liberated from the transcendent law of God; he is free to obey to the transcendental rules of his own autonomous reasoning. Kant's 'solution' is intrinsically contradictory, because in his theory the duty still refers to an opposition, while the will is thought to remove it. Kant manages only to distance himself from the heteronomy of a transcendent religion *outside* of the bounds of reason alone. Instead of being enslaved to an external master, we are now enslaved to a master within. While love and truth in fact implicate the reconciliation of duty and inclination.

> 'Love God above everything and thy neighbour as thyself' was quite wrongly regarded by Kant as a 'command requiring respect for the law which commands love.' And it is on this confusion of the utterly accidental kind of phraseology expressive of life with the moral imperative [...] that there rests Kant's profound reduction of what he calls a command [...] to his moral imperative.[13]

The law as law destroys life. The Jew is dutifully subjected to the law; that is why he does not, and cannot love. Love reconciles a man to his neighbour, and to himself. Jesus' command to love one's neighbour as one self, has a completely different meaning than the law of the Jews, and it is also not in the least in line with the Kantian imperative. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount considering the fulfilment of the law is in fact targeted at the negation of the law as law. The divine command compels us to a love that makes the law redundant; it appeals to an organic and natural affection towards the other.

> This spirit of Jesus, a spirit raised above morality, is visible, directly attacking the laws, in the Sermon on the Mount, which is an attempt, elaborated in numerous examples, to strip the laws of legality, of their legal form. The Sermon does not teach reverence for the laws; on the contrary, it exhibits that which fulfils the law but annuls it as law and so is something higher than obedience to law and makes law superfluous.[14]

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[12] Idem, pp. 211–212/323.
[13] Idem, p. 213/325.
[14] Idem, p. 212/324.

To Hegel, the (in essence) 'Jewish' legalistic thinking of Kant represents nothing more than a transcendental metamorphosis of the aforementioned 'unfulfilled eternity' of the Old Testament. It is a 'finite infinity' (*schlechte Unendlichkeit*) as the later Hegel would call it, that is, an eternity that is cut off from truth, reality and nature. According to Hegel, Kant's conception of abstract law and 'pure' duty is a mere repetition of the law of the Pharisees. His conception is an incomplete, merely idealistic internalization (*'Verinnerlichung'*) of the very same law that has judged and killed Jesus.[15]

> It is a sort of dishonour to love when it is commanded, i.e., when love, something living, a spirit, is called by name. To name it is to reflect on it, and its name or the utterance of its name is not spirit, not its essence, but something opposed to that. Only in name or as a word, can it be commanded; it is only possible to say: Thou shalt love. Love itself pronounces no imperative. It is no universal opposed to a particular, no unity of the concept, but a unity of spirit, divinity. To love God is to feel one's self in the 'all' of life, with no restrictions, in the infinite.[16]

4. The Jewish Fate of Christianity—'Within the Bounds of Reason'

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1827, Hegel repeats in a different form most of his early criticism on the important 'limitations' of Jewish faith, of 'the Religion of sublimity'. I tend to disagree with Hodgson on the point where he says that in the later Lectures the critique of Judaism is muted, and where he speaks of 'the favourable reassessment of Judaism' begun in 1824.[17] Certainly, 'invaluable' for the dialectical development of religion (that is not yet there in the early work) is the 'spiritually subjective unity' of the Jewish God; a unity that the Greek Gods lacked. Indeed Hegel stands notably sympathetic to this divine unity that is absolute power, wisdom and purpose, and for which it merits the name of God. This God subsists without sensible shape. "[I]t is withdrawn from

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[15] Again, the mature Hegel remained with this early evaluation of 'the Jews', although later on, we often find a more 'sublime' form of antipathy. In the Lectures on the Philosophy of History and also in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion the Jewish religion ('die Religion der Erhabenheit') represents a mere 'nothingness'. The birth of Christianity is the absolute negation of this negation.

[16] Idem, p. 247/363: "Gott lieben ist sich im All des Lebens schrankenlos im Unendlichen fühlen […]."

[17] See Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction' to the Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, p. 55.

the natural and so from the sensible realm, withdrawn both from external sensibility and from sensible representation." (L2 27, 669/561) It is the highest philosophical concept that exists only for thought. "As thinking it subsists only for thinking, and therefore subsists in its [activity of] judgment." (L2 27, 671/563)

God's wisdom involves the process of 'divine particularization'. God creates the world *ex nihilo*. However, creation at this stage is still relatively 'externally' connected to its creator. Creation is not yet that what is eternally and immanently developing *within* the idea of God. God is the initiator of creation, not the result (creation is not this divine subject itself). God can be known only to a certain extent, namely through his goodness and justice, the specific moments of his wisdom. (L2 27, 675/567) God is good in his relations to the world, in determining himself by creating a free and relatively autonomous world. "Justice in turn is the manifestation of the nullity or ideality of this finite [being], it is the fact that this finite being is not genuine independence." (L2 27, 675/567) God is justice in that he does not abandon the world but maintains his relation to creation by means of a divine purpose. The world *ought* to be, and likewise it *ought* to transform itself and pass away. In this sense, 'the One' distinguishes Himself from his determinations, or from His world; this is His justice. This is indeed a major step within the development of the Spirit.

God is 'in' the world, but this identity does not take shape in a 'cheaply obtained' sensible form. Nature is in fact divested of divinity. (L2 27, 676/567) "God's appearance is at once grasped as sublimity that is superior to appearance in [ordinary] reality." (L2 27, 677/569) With regard to the Greek God, human beings relate to the divine by relating themselves to nature. This identity of the ideal and the real leads to a blunting of differences. To Hegel the invaluable contribution of the Jewish Religion is that it 'liberated' God out of nature and beauty in this all too simplistic form. His determinations are merely independent natural objects. "Nature is submissive and manifests only God, but in such a way that God subsists at the same time outside this manifestation." (L 1827, 366) God's purpose is to become known by consciousness. And the more determinate purpose is that the world should 'subjectively' manifest the divine by ethically proclaiming the glory of God, and by *actively* testifying to the holiness of God. (L2 27, 679/571) This legality or right is what is divine; it is something worldly within finite consciousness; that is, at the same time, decreed by God.

According to Hegel, God's purpose in creation, his wisdom, is in this stage still only *abstract*. The Jewish wisdom is merely *abstract universality*.

The wisdom and self-determining of God does not yet include God's development. This development in the idea of God is first found in the religion where the nature of God is open and manifest. The defect of this idea at the present stage is that God is indeed the One, but yet is within himself only in the determinacy of this unity; he is not what is eternally self-developing within itself. This is still not a developed determination; to this extent, what we call wisdom is an abstraction, it is abstract universality. (L2 27, 683/575)

The divine purpose of creation is that it conforms to divine law, both moral commandments and ceremonial laws. That is the service of the Lord:

> Because the purpose is still in fact abstract, the consequence is that the commandments, both those in force as properly religious and those of the cultus, appear only as something given by God, as something prescribed and immutable, something eternally and firmly posited. The purpose is still abstract; and when we speak of 'abstraction' in the purpose, we are referring to something immediate in its determinate being or existence—something subsisting in just this one way, something immutable. (L2 27, 686/578)

A human being is supposed to obey and do right, although in itself (in a more developed understanding) cultus involves the requirement that religious activities, like the carrying out of the divine law, be understood, and that their wisdom be known. "[Cultus] demands the insight that these activities are rational, that they have a connection with the particularity of human life and sensibilities (indeed, with its legitimate particularity)." (L2 27, 686/578) However, in the Jewish religion this wisdom has not been developed and recognized. In comparison to the God of the Consummate Religion the God of the Jews is still insufficiently developed and 'revealed' within creation (God is still too sublime). The laws are simply to be obeyed and forever immutable: "the divine commandment is only an abstract precept of wisdom; in this mode it is not understood, it is done as something external. Because God is absolute power, the activities are intrinsically indeterminate, and for that reason they are external, being determined quite arbitrarily." (L2 27, 687/578)

To Hegel the message of love seems to contain the solution to the abstract externality (the sublimity) of the Jewish ethos, the negation of which is (supposedly) implied in the spirit of Christianity and in the philosophy of history. As we have seen in the Early Writings, love aims at an absolute reconciliation of opposites: individuality and universality; duty and inclination; God and man; subject and object. God has become man in His son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit, we, as a people, can

participate in His divine nature, which is love. The 'method of love' is already dialectical, although still in a non-logical sense, in the form of feeling. And although love as a feeling deploys unification, it does so in a merely restricted sense. And Christian love itself (love in a primitive, non-rational interpretation) has its share in developing new forms of separation and demarcation.

In contradistinction to love, reflection seems to lead only to logical oppositions. That is why the early Hegel thinks it is only in *spiritual* terms that the divine can be spoken of. But he already recognizes the possible dangers of the merely spiritual form of religion. Love and enthusiasm can also become an impediment to unification as they are confronted with the 'cold' and 'hard' world of (for instance) private property and property rights of unloving and selfish individuals. One cannot possibly deny these aspects of reality, and if unification is to be realized *in the world*, it has to be a unity that encompasses this impersonal sphere of negativity. Because it cannot accommodate this world (because it cannot account for this 'negative' dimension of life), spiritual love (love in unreflected, irrational form) eventually degenerates to the otherworldly 'positive religion' of a privileged sect that accordingly brings unity only to a certain extent, and beyond this to a new disunity and discord. This also is part of the fate of Christianity, that precisely in trying to present a direct alternative to it, unknowingly and involuntary shares in the fate of Judaism. It is only by passing through a *logical* and *reasonable* mediation of opposites, and not through bypassing these oppositions in sense of this immediate and unreflective love, that unity and freedom can be realized (which still is what the spirit of Christianity promises to do). Reconciliation is the truth of religion, but it only attains this truth in philosophy.

There is no truth in abstract law. Laws are merely strange, transcendent, untimely and unchangeable. In his early work Hegel aims at saving the truth of the law by eliminating it; by means of a 'pantheism of love' that fulfils the law through a religious, non-logical synthesis of duty and inclination. In these early texts reflection necessarily means 'estrangement'. Nevertheless, love as a mere feeling is also restricted in its potential of bringing unity and life. Christian religion develops the message of Christ into an exclusive and even sectarian belief. In the hands of the apostles, the spirit of Christianity becomes a 'positive religion', an otherworldly enthusiasm that does not fit in with reality, and—in particular—comes into conflict with the order and the laws of the state. Mere Christianity remains too 'subjective'. And it belongs to the fate of Christianity that it breathes new life into the spirit of Judaism, an enemy that supposedly

was already defeated. Left to itself, the spirit of Christianity deteriorates into a dogma and a codified belief that divides the world instead of uniting it. The purpose of Jesus' moral teaching (absolute reconciliation) cannot possibly be realized within the immediate boundaries of Christian religion. A purely feeling or 'aesthetic' religion of love eventually leads to disunity and disarray. Religion proper precedes philosophy, but eventually (as history shows) it is not the way to reconciliation: "It is the fate [of Christian Religion] that church and state, piety and virtue, spiritual and worldly action can never dissolve into one."[18] The finite world remains to be merely finite (not infinite). The world remains to be merely a stage, a stairway to heaven and a passage to an eternity 'outside the world'.

The absolute idea is the unity of the concept of religion and reality, which is spirit. In this respect, the divine command is not 'true'. "Truth is beauty intellectually represented."[19] To act in love is one thing, but to be able to *see* it is another; every determinate 'object' here on earth is merely finite; confined to the restrictions and separation of reflective logic. But if this is so, how can one represent intellectually the living beauty and spirituality of love? Indeed, we need to be able to *objectify* this love. However, where is this unity to be found; where else than in the inner citadel of our subjective consciousness? What is the 'object' of love; where is this religious object that love as unity promises?

This is Hegel's research program from 1799 onwards; to rethink and conceptualize the inner truth of religion. The spiritual content of faith (the absolute) cannot be directly verified by the 'unspiritual', that is the sensible as such, (for instance) by miracles, sacraments and by Christ's empty grave, but only by the conformity of something 'positive' to what is ideal and rational. It is essential that the object would need to be in conformity to our own rational spirit. With this in mind Hegel more and more sacrifices Revelation and religion to reason and thought. Not the all-too-Jewish religion-proper but reason, some reasonable appropriation of religion, is thought be able to 'realize' the truth of Christianity; its spirit of life, the love and unity in which the unhappy consciousness of the abstract individual is 'consumed' by the intersubjectivity of the spiritual community. Reconciliation is to be found not in the individual heart (*conscience*), or within the confines of the church (or the cloister), but in

[18] Hegel, 'Spirit of Christianity', p. 301/418.
[19] Idem, p. 196/288.

objective spirit and reasonable freedom of ethical life (family; civil society and state) and its institutions.

Nevertheless, Hegel's decisive movement towards philosophy confronts him with the difficulty that the 'Jewish' spirit and fate of Christianity (the estrangement and the unhappy consciousness of religion) is also very much present within the confines of philosophy itself; especially in Kant, Fichte and Jacobi.[20] According to the protestant tradition, 'the principle of the North', as Hegel calls it in *Glauben und Wissen* (1801), God and his divine wisdom cannot be known by man. Not only love is 'not true' in the sense that it cannot be known in an intellectual or theoretical sense. Knowledge of things as they are in themselves (das *Ding an sich*, the thing as God knows it) is not possible. Knowledge of God and of his divine knowledge is not possible. The reflexive subjectivity and the self-restriction of reason in Kant (and the others) are both fruits of the tree of Protestantism; both are counteracting the self-assured rationalism of scholasticism. In addition, this 'philosophical Protestantism' (*die Reflexionsphilosophie der Subjektivität*) makes a strong point of the division of faith and knowledge, of the finite and the infinite:

> The great form of the world spirit, however, which has discovered itself in these philosophies, is the principle of the North and, from the religious point of view, of Protestantism, the subjectivity in which beauty and truth presents itself in feelings and dispositions, in love and understanding. Religion builds its temples and altars in the heart of the individual, and sighs and prayers seek the God whose contemplation is forbidden because there is always the danger of the intellect, which would see the contemplated object as a thing, the forest as firewood. It is true that the inward must also become outward, the intention attain to reality in action, the immediate religious feeling express itself in outward movement, and the faith that flees

[20] Cf. Derrida, *Glas*, p. 34a, where he, in his accurate and patient reconstruction of Hegel's interpretation, refers to Kantianism as, 'structurally, a Judaism.' The Christian God is a revealed God. God is God insofar as he knows himself. This knowledge is self-consciousness in man, man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge *in* God. Kant fails to comprehend this: for him God is not an object of knowledge; he doesn't see the relation between God and man. Derrida: "To claim to found Christianity on reason and nonetheless to make non-manifestation, the being-hidden of God, the principle of this religion is to understand nothing about revelation. Kant is Jewish: he believes in a jealous, envious God." Idem, p. 213a. Of course, one cannot simply consent to Hegel's suggestion that Kant is a Jew (Derrida himself would never consent to this). Kant's internalization (*Verinnerlichung*) of the law, his 'subjective legalism' is more in accordance with modernism (Enlightenment philosophy and religious liberalism), and certainly not so with Orthodox Judaism and its insistence on the externality and alterity of the Other. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Philosophie und Gesetz. Beiträge zum Verständnis Maimunis und seiner Vorläufer*, Berlin: Schocken Verlag 1935, esp. pp. 9–29.

> the objectivity of knowledge take objective form in thoughts, concepts and words; but the objective is very carefully distinguished by the intellect from the subjective, and it is the element which has no value and is nothing, just as the struggle of subjective beauty must be precisely to take all due precautions against the necessity of the subjectives becoming objective. [...] It is precisely as a result of its fleeing the finite and holding fast to subjectivity that it finds the beautiful turned altogether into things, the forest into firewood, pictures into things that have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear, while the ideals that cannot be taken in wholly intelligible reality like sticks and stones become fabrications of the imagination and every relation to them is seen as empty play, or as dependence on objects and as superstition.[21]

To Hegel, the final consequence of the principle of the North is the complete desecration of the natural and social world. Kant's 'Protestantism', his religion within the bounds of reason, cultivates an empty, otherworldly, deontological ethos, to the detriment of the urge to the reformation of *this* world. Faith is made so sublime (or 'Jewish', in Hegel's perspective) that it becomes ineffective and even destructive for our daily life. Both spheres, the finite as well as the infinite, have to be connected to each other, and where religion proper leaves off, philosophy should take on the responsibility to finish what it started. Philosophy should try to recognize 'the rose of reason within the cross of reality'. It should try to close the gap between human and divine knowledge by transcending, through reason, the limitations of abstract reflexive understanding.

This is why Hegel since his early (Frankfurter) writings has been looking for a dialectical synthesis in which the estrangement of understanding, the negativity of logical opposition (including the negativity of the law), is both recognized and *saved* as a moment in the argumentation, as well as eliminated in the unity of absolute science. Not religion but philosophy leads the way to life and unity. Only a philosophy of the unity of identity and difference is able to realize what love promises.

For ethics to be true, it is necessary that it is *real*. To be real (*wirklich*), it must have grown out of the development of an intelligible historical-dialectical process. Certainly, the resulting *Sittlichkeit* also implies strict political laws and duties that simply confront the *citoyen* of a state; laws that this subject simply needs obey. Nevertheless, these laws are at least manmade, in contradistinction to the Jewish laws. Certainly, one simply

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[21] G. W. F. Hegel, 'Glauben und Wissen' in: *Hauptwerke in sechs Bänden*, Bd. 1, Darmstadt: WBG 1999, p. 316 (my translation).

needs to obey them. However, from an alternative perspective the 'positive' laws and duties of a citizen are in fact *rights* that embody the Idea, or *realization* of his freedom. Moreover, these laws and rights should and can be recognized as such. Freedom exists by means of this conscious participation in the state.

According to Hegel, there is a possible conceptual system in which the divine content is expressed in terms of the logical oppositions of understanding. This system is implied in the unity of identity and difference, in the logical 'negation of the negation' such as only reason (*Vernunft*) can recognize and affirm. It is neither the divine command nor the love as a mere feeling, but reason and philosophy that can lead the way to reconciliation. Although through religion-proper human consciousness and absolute divinity remain juxtaposed, religion also remains to represent an important dialectical and pedagogical image (*Vorstellung*) of the reconciliatory truth as it is comprehended in philosophy.[22]

5. Law and Love: The Alternative, Jewish Perspective

We cannot refrain from commencing a more critical evaluation of what we learned here from Hegel's (mature and premature) dialectical interpretation of Judaism. From a moral standpoint, it would not be right to do so. And Hegel himself would agree that a faithful reconstruction as such is not enough; that it fails to do justice to his philosophy of religion and his understanding of (the place of) Judaism within the context of the development of spirit.

We must, I think, recognize that Hegel's account of the 'limitations' of Judaism reflects an anti-Semitic sentiment long exhibited by European Christians.[23] According to Hegel, the jealous God of the Jews has no place in either Absolute Religion or in Absolute Knowledge. However, when we

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[22] Cf. what Hegel says at the end of his preface to the *Philosophy of Right*. The distinctive principle of Protestantism is the unwillingness to acknowledge anything which has not been justified by the subject itself. "What Luther inaugurated as faith in feeling and in the testimony of the spirit is the same thing that the spirit, at a more mature stage of its development, endeavors to grasp in the *concept* so as to free itself in the present and thus to find itself therein."

[23] Cf. Simon Critchley: "Hegel's attitude is perhaps philosophically anti-Semitic, that is to say, the conceptual matrix of family, community, and property has no place for the Jew, if the latter is defined as the other to Greco-Christian philosophical conceptuality." Critchley, 'A commentary upon Derrida's reading of Hegel in Glas', *Hegel after Derrida*, ed. Stuart Barnett, London/New York: Routledge 1998, p. 204.

look at it closely, one cannot rule out the possibility that the problem here is not necessarily located in the 'object' of this sentiment (the God of the Jews, and Jewish faith), but in the narrow perspective of the subject thereof (Hegel himself). When one reads 'The Spirit of Christianity', and the negative evaluation of the divine command in his mature Philosophy of Religion, it is hard to believe that Hegel did not see the irony and the paradox in his own representation of the incarnation. In addition, it is hard to understand how he could fail to notice the 'limitations' and possible dangers associated with the internalization and annihilation of the law-as-law, as he would have it.

Let me start off with a few critical questions and remarks on the concept of love that is of vital importance to Hegel's account of Christianity. According to Hegel, the Jew as a dutiful subject to the law does not, and cannot love. Is not one of the dangers of love that one tends exclusively to reserve one's charity to those neighbours that fall within one's horizon, that is, with whom one can indeed easily, and *emphatically*, identify oneself? Should we not at least try to extend our love to those who cannot simply be recognized as 'other selves', to those who cannot be seen to belong to our unity of life, and to those who are to remain (in this respect) somewhat strange and even 'opposed' to us? In respect to the dangers of any possible trade-off (a 'bad' incarnation), Jewish ethics and the importance of the law for the Jewish faith deserve the benefit of the doubt. Let me put it straightforward. Least of all they cannot be ruled out as hateful and unloving for trying to cultivate a radical hospitality within the soul, a 'desert like emptiness' that is, for something and someone wholly strange and unexpected; something or someone that cannot possibly be reduced to and reconciled with the 'economy of the same'.

From a Jewish perspective the tables are turned. Hegel's obsession with the unity of life and with the reconciliation of the law with nature can be said to rest on an erotic form of love. A love that desires and 'takes' more than it is prepared to give. The immanent-transcendence of his 'Spirit of Christianity' is an expression of a political kind of self-love, through which eternity proper and real love are being corrupted and betrayed. Reflexivity and recognition (*Anerkennung*) both lead to the destruction of this radical love; a love that intends (by means of our duty) to break with the usual 'economical' reciprocity (*do ut des*) through which the more I give, the more I have. Love is not an economical investment. Love as it is, or better still, love as it *should* be, needs to break with the idea of a *bonum commune* that gathers together me and the other in the 'concrete-universality' (*konkrete Algemeinheit*) of a 'genuine society' (*Gemeinschaft*). The move-

ment of speculative dialectics always results in a reappropriation of what has been sacrificed. Judaism seems to deconstruct this economy. To be able to love is to be able to transcend oneself, without restraint. To learn to love is to become 'a stranger to oneself', without (unconsciously and economically) trying to return from this *exitus*. 'You shall love the alien as yourself.' (Lev. 19; 33) To love an alien is to *be* an alien; and it takes an Alien to be an alien. To love is to die to oneself and to the world without trying to (economically) 'survive' this gift of death and this sacrifice of the self. This loving *exitus* is not unlike the exodus that Hegel detested so intensely: the exodus of Abraham from Chaldea, the land of his ancestors. God commanded him to this 'brutal act of disseverance' that snapped the bonds of his communal life and his (erotic) love for his kinsfolk.

The first act which made Abraham the progenitor of a nation is a disseverance which snaps the bonds of communal life and love. The entirety of the relationships in which he had hitherto lived with men and nature, these beautiful relationships of his youth (Joshua 24:2), he spurned.[24]

It is the 'sedentary' spirit of Hegel's (idea of) Christianity that takes offence to the figure of the wandering Jew and his strange law. Wandering is the Jewish fate and the punishment of any spirituality that is not firmly rooted in the substantiality of ethical life. However, according to an alternative Jewish reading, the awe-inspiring law initiates a sublime transgression and hospitality. The law cultivates an awareness of singularity, instead of being merely an expression of indifference towards the other, and a restriction or 'limitation' to the sublimity of love.[25] On the other hand, seen from a Jewish perspective, love in the Hegelian-Christian sense runs the risk of being a 'fulfoulment' rather than a fulfilment (*pleroma*) of the law. In this perspective, 'Hegel' stands for a pollution of love that limits the intrinsically transgressive effect of law itself.[26] The other, towards whom justice is to be shown, is an *absolute* other (the wholly other represents eternity). As such, the other is never 'present' and cannot (as such)

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[24] Hegel, 'Spirit of Christianity', p. 185/277.

[25] Cf. Timo Slootweg, 'Das Göttliche Gebot und der Geist der Liebe. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Hegels frühen theologischen Voraussetzungen', in: A. Arndt, P. Cruysberghs, A. Przylebski (Eds.) *Hegel-Jahrbuch 2010—Geist?*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 2010, pp. 72–78.

[26] Kant, 'the Jew from Königsberg', is also very much conscious of this transcendent dimension of the law. Laws cannot be automatically applied. Their application necessitates an *Urteilskraft* (a force of judgment) that is not reducible to rules, because (in that case) these rules, in their turn, would have to be interpreted, *ad infinitum*. See Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B171f. For this Kantian line of thought, see also J. Derrida, *Force de loi. Le «fondement mystique de l'autorité»*, Paris: Galilée 1994.

be enclosed within the loving embrace of any form of *Gemeinschaft*. Recognition and harmonization threaten the (originally) 'open' and hospitable existence of mankind, in juxtaposition (that is) to laws and duties that seem to interminably 'postpone' and defer the longed for reconciliation of the self in relation to the other and in relation to the unity of life. Seen from this alternative perspective, the spirit of the Jewish-Christian tradition is a messianic spirit. Its spirit is to aspire interminably to a righteousness that is always 'to come', and that cannot possibly become apparent and present. It is an unlimited waiting for justice without any forgone expectation or 'horizon'; it is an *absolute* hospitality that keeps watch over its own quasi-transcendental universality.[27]

What Augustine tells us about time, may apply to love as well. As long as we do not ask ourselves what they are, everyone seems to know what they are. From the moment on that we dare to question them, we seem to lose our innocence, and time and love reveal their unfathomable character. In this precarious situation in which the success of our task is at the very least not solely within our own rational power and seems to depend on some kind of grace, a philosopher, in his attempts to write about love, might be best off doing his work both actually 'out of love' as well as 'in the name of love'. To Hegel, religious violence 'for the love of God', and this also applies to the violence of the crusades, is an important sign that the (meaning of the) incarnation of God in mankind has not yet fully penetrated the heart of human dignity. Religious indifference and violence reflect estrangement. They are the morbid reflection of a deficient or 'abstract' mode of religious consciousness, of a consciousness that projects its longing for a long lost universality, for the unity of life itself, unto a transcendent, divine 'entity', that presents itself merely in a sensuous and 'unspiritual' form (holy sepulchre). Religious violence is in flagrant opposition to Christ's spiritual example of compassion and charity through which mankind works itself towards universal recognition and community.

However, as we have seen, Hegel's Idealism, and his analysis of Judaism is not completely free of religious violence itself. Moreover, this violence is not just 'incidental' (which is the usual benevolent approach to his anti-Semitism). For it is in itself a consequence of the Hegelian dialectic that logically necessitates the sublime fulfilment of a merely 'schlechte

[27] For this alternative, *messianic* spirit, see for instance J. Derrida, in: *Spectres de Marx*, Paris: Éditions Galileé 1993; *Specters of Marx*, New York: Routledge 1994.

Unendlichkeit' (a 'finite infinity'). For Hegel, transcendence is immanent in the ideality of the 'konkrete-Algemeinheit' (the 'concrete universality'), that is: in the objective spirit and in absolute science. But whoever looks for 'das Jenseitige' ('the Beyond') on *this* side of life, runs the risk of rendering eternal value to some kind of presence that belongs to the sphere of the temporary; to what is only an imperfect *historical* representation of the eternal. In addition, this idolatry would not only degrade the holiness of God—and God is Love, but with that, the holiness of the human soul and its conscience (as an image of God) would become damaged and violated as well.

That this is precisely what happens in Hegelian dialectics becomes clear as soon as we see that what really binds the soul to eternity (love, hope and faith; conscience) is in fact sacrificed to the illusory certainty of the Hegelian *Geist*. As long as its God is distant and strange, and much of the effect of this strange God is carried over from Judaism to Christianity, the soul remains in a state of unhappy consciousness. But ultimately the divine and absolute subject, its knowledge of good and evil, and last but not least, its 'work' will take its due and proper place in the centre of the universe. Hegel's philosophical God comes to prevail over the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the end, faith has done its job as a mere 'conception' (*Vorstellung*) of the immanent-transcendence that Hegel develops and explains in purely reasonable terms. Religion is 'true' only, up to a certain point. And after being philosophically understood (after going through Hegel's reasonable interpretation), faith and religion can be left behind. Although they remain usefull in order to fulfil some instrumental, political and pedagogical purposes in the service of the ethical disposition (*Gesinnung*) of the State and its people (the remaining purpose of religion-proper is to develop the individuals participation in communal life and state; to stimulate its '*Bildung zum Allgemeinen*').[28]

[28] Love comes from a good conscience (cf. Timothy 1; 5). To Hegel however, a 'proper' religious conscience is still merely 'subjective', and as such a moral form of evil. Instead, 'true conscience' is contained in the 'horizontal', *ethical* disposition (*Gesinnung*): "True conscience is the disposition to will what is good in and for itself; it therefore has fixed principles, and these have for it the character of determinacy and duties which are objective for themselves. In contrast to its content—i.e. truth—conscience is merely the *formal aspect* of the activity of the will, and *this* will, has no distinctive content of its own. But the objective system of these principles and duties and the union of subjective knowledge with this system are present only when the point of view of ethics has been reached. Here, within the formal point of view of morality, conscience lacks this objective content, and it is thus for itself the infinite formal certainty of itself, which for this reason is at the same

Religion integrates the state at the deepest level. That is why the state ought to require all its citizens to belong to a religious community. However, in the *Philosophy of Right* Hegel clearly states that, although the content of religion relates to the absolute, it differs from it in form. The form of religion—religious *feeling*—destroys everything that is objective. Through religion the objective spirit, the determinate laws and institutions of the state that embody our freedom, are all dissolved into the muddle of subjectivity and undifferentiated inwardness:

> Those who seek the Lord, and assure themselves, in their uneducated opinion, that they possess everything immediately instead of undertaking the work of raising their subjectivity to cognition of the truth and knowledge of objective right and duty, can produce nothing but folly, outrage, and the destruction of all ethical relations.[29]

Here we may already see foreshadowed what is happening nowadays under the influence of the Enlightenment: religion and religious conscience are being expelled as the fanatical, the irrational and unreasonable. After having done its necessary work, religion is exorcised from the sanctity of democracy, to the private sphere. And politics, once divorced from religion in this all too subjective sense tends to fossilize to 'closure'; to *immanent* transcendence, self-righteousness and indifference.

Seen from a Jewish perspective, and Christianity might be more continuous with Judaism than Hegel is prepared to acknowledge, it is not safe to identify the divinity with any living present, or to positively affirm the 'fullness of time' in any 'here and now'. It is dangerous to define with divine authority the incarnation of the infinite in the finite, to define as a holy instance of eternity something or someone determinate (a name, formulation, habit, practice, or nation). For once we have God on our side, it becomes dangerously costly (potentially lethal even) not to belong to the chosen and blessed (one's fellow citizens), to belong to those who cannot or will not affirm the revealed truth of the *parousia*; the 'rest', the unfaithful, the inessential, the eternally displaced that cannot—*in principle*—be accommodated by any System.

Hegel's opposition of Law and Gospel, of letter and spirit is a pseudo Christian attempt to deface Judaism. And it does not do a great service

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time the certainty of *this* subject." G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1991, §137, p. 164.

[29] Idem, §270R, pp. 292–294. See also Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Berlin: 1830, §552 where he makes the same point.

to Christianity in interpreting the religion of love as a negation of Jewish faith; in not being able to reconcile Christianity with Judaism and in proving itself to be so disdainful to the Jews and of Jewish religion. We have seen ample proof of his harsh judgments on the 'limitations' of Jewish faith. Hegel's denunciation of the Jew, this pseudo Christian onto theology is quite sincere. In a sense it is as hypocritical as some of the Pharisees with whom Jesus had to deal. These scribes were certainly Jews, but we may not take them *pars pro toto*. According to Martin Buber (for instance), it is the God-idea of Prophets that represents the Jewish spirit at its best, namely: "a transcendent unity . . . the world-creating, world-ruling, world-loving God." Although, as history continues "the idea becomes diluted, fades, until the living God is transmuted into lifeless a schema characteristic of the later priestly rule and of the beginnings of rabbinism",[30] Jewish spirituality has always centred on the personal encounter (*Begegnung*) with the human, in whom we encounter God. For Buber, the law is merely is a derivative of this Jewish religiosity, and it is only through man that revelation becomes legislation. In this sense also, Jesus himself was very much a Jew. As a Jew he thought and spoke in Jewish language, and what is more, he spoke Hebrew even after he had sat himself at the right hand of his Father. (Acts 26; 14) What Jesus and John the Baptist proclaimed was nothing else than the renewal of this original Jewish religiosity.[31] And indeed, recent scholarship on the subject confirmed these (Buber's) insights; it has made clear that Jesus merely preached a relatively radical Judaism that drew upon the most original of Judaic resources.[32]

This of course, is meant not to deny completely the importance of the divine command for Jewish faith. What is to be said (from a Jewish perspective) in response to Hegel's critique hat it is 'not true'? Justice is receptive to the exceptional singular that is not simply an individual 'case' of a universal principle that can 'automatically' be applied. In one sense certainly, the law is blind to the singular. And as such, the law, the universal and ethical (*Sittlichkeit*), are the temptation (*Anfechtung*) that one ought to resist. Moreover, the general (*das Allgemeine*) must be

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[30] Martin Buber, *On Judaism*, Nahum Glatzer (ed.), New York: Schocken Books 1995, pp. 42–43.

[31] Buber, *On Judaism*, pp. 79–94.

[32] See for instance: G. Vermes, *Jesus the Jew. A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1973; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1985, and of the same author, *The Historical Figure of* Jesus, New York: Penguin Press 1993, and Marinus de Jonge, *Christology in Context. The earliest Christian response to Jesus*, Westminster: John Knox Press 1987.

deconstructed in the name of justice. The temptation is the duty, the law and the ethical itself. They keep him from doing God's will.

Nevertheless, the resistance to the law (its *deconstruction*) is not something that necessarily comes from without (*ex nihilo*) as something (love) that is wholly other than the law. And the resistance need not be understood in the sense of the Hegelian 'negation of a negation'. From a certain Jewish perspective, the law actually deconstructs itself. It itself initiates its transgression or 'suspension'. Because of its mystical foundations, the law is indeterminate and open towards any future applications. The gospel actually confirms this when it refers to the law as the shadow of a justice to come: "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming, not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices be repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship." (Hebr. 10; 1). To automatically subsume particular cases under general rules is to violate their singularity. It is to violate 'life', as Hegel would call it. However, it is just because of their indeterminateness, that we need to reinterpret legal categories to conform to the case. Just as we have to reinterpret the case to conform to legal categories. In either case however, we need to refer to the law. Because without any law the decision threatens to become unrestrained power and violence.

6. Tables Turned: Kierkegaard's Alternative Christian Reading

The deadening force of spiritless legalism and slavish servility threatens every faith. It is not the exclusive 'privilege' of Jewish faith (or any other). In Paul, it is by means of a law that these inauthentic restrictions and determinations are abolished and negated. "Everything is permissible for me" (1 Cor. 6; 12). Certainly a Christian is a servant to his neighbour, but without sacrificing his freedom, without which their can be no love. This also means that a Christian is in principle not bound by the opinions, the traditions and values of others (the objective spirit). "For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?" (1 Cor. 10; 29)

Those who will not live by the law shall die by the law. When Paul—'Paul the Jew'—says that one must live, not after the letter but after the spirit of the law, and that the righteous shall live through faith (that this is actual freedom and sovereignty) this is essentially an elaboration of a sentence in Habakuk 2; 4. In Galatians, he tells us that this is something 'we' Jews already know. In Habakuk it is still without the help of Jesus (the Mediator) that one is supposed to live by the law through faith alone

(because we are all sinners and remain to be dependent on the mercy of God). The fulfilling of the law through faith is already an important theme in the Torah although at other places it merely stresses the commandments. Within letters of Paul there is, to be sure, also much 'commanding Torah'. In addition, according to Paul it is in fact a *law* (the law of Christ) that delivers us from the law: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal. 6; 2) It is the 'good law', the 'law of love' that promises to fulfil the law (the entire law). The commandment of love liberates us from working under the curse of the law (works without faith) and commands us to open up to the love of God that mercifully does its work through us, his servants and instruments.

I will linger just a little longer on the relationship of law and love because Hegel's philosophy of Judaism very much concentrates on this subject; and there is—to my opinion—an important lesson to be learned here. In Kierkegaard's Lutheran reading of Christianity, we find further reason to question the strong and hateful opposition to the divine command:

> On the whole, it is unbelievable what confusion has entered the sphere of religion since the time when 'thou shalt' was abolished as the sole regulative aspect of man's relationship to God. This 'thou shalt' must be present in any determination of the religious.[33]

Although law and love are not the same and cannot be reconciled in an easy way, there is at least one important similarity in that love itself is the most important divine command; it is itself a kind of law. It is the law of the gospel; it is a law as law; an 'abstract law' as Hegel would have it:

> But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. And one of them, a lawyer [it. T.S.] asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matt. 22; 34–40)

The law as law initiates the teleological suspension of the ethical. It is in fact a law that repeats the old law in Leviticus: "Love your neighbour as

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[33] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto death. A Christian Psychological Exposition for Upbuilding and Awakening*, H. Hong / E. Hong (Eds.), New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1980, p. 115. (SKS 11, 226)

yourself. I am the Lord." (Lev. 19; 18) In 'Kierkegaard' it is stressed that only love as law is the excess, the transcendence through which justice takes place. God is love. With God everything is possible (Matt. 19; 26). Everything, not only 'the real', the necessary or 'the possible', but also the impossible that transgresses the all too human, natural, the probable and actual. Everything is possible for him who believes (Mark 9; 23). For love realizes the impossible: forgiveness, love for God above all, and love for ones neighbour. Necessity's Despair (this 'Sickness unto death', as Kierkegaard names it) is to lack possibility. The 'abstract' law of love does not (in effect) *destroy* the law, but it perfects the law. Hegel's denunciation of the law-as-law, of the law of love, fails to appreciate this transcendent, typically Jewish import. His philosophical revocation of the law leads to the accommodation, the naturalization and neutralization of love. It leads to what is nothing more than a mere 'idea' of love; to the idea of love as recognition. Christian love however, is not simply continuous with nature and humanity. What presents itself as love, in form of human love, friendship and patriotism, is generally nothing more than a sublime form of egoism. Seen closely, this love is merely self-love, erotic love or prefatory love, love for a preferred object (preferred only because it satisfies my needs), while the law-as-law reminds me that I *must* love my neighbour (every other without any restriction). Love is a law and a duty. The commandment 'wrenches open' the lock of self-love. And only as law is love eternally secure and safe against the self-love, jealousy and hatred that reside within worldly love and recognition.[34]

Love is no friend of the community. Love seeks *congregation* in the Kingdom of God (in heaven). Even the church here on earth is not (not as a *community*) an appropriate object of love. The church is the mystical body of Christ, the 'community' of free and separate believers (who might not even know of the existence of their fellow travellers). Communal life is not so much the purpose of being, as it is merely an instrument for the single individual to inform his neighbour about God. The Law of love sets each one apart with his conscience in relation to his personal God. The law itself sets him apart (*coram Deo*), to the 'detriment' of his involvement

[34] "Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love eternally secured against every change, eternally made free in blessed independence." Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, H. Hong and E. Hong (Eds.), Princeton New York: Princeton UP 1995, p. 29. (SKS 9, 36) Cf. Franz Rosenzweig, *The star of Redemption*, transl. W. W. Hallo, Notre Dame London: University of Notre Dame Press 1985, p. 214: "The love for God is to express itself in love for one's neighbor. It is for this reason that love of neighbor can and must be commanded."

in the merely general *bonum commune*. But this relation is not degrading, and it does not deny his freedom. On the contrary! Only when one has become a Christian in becoming a person in a personal relationship to God, only thus, by way of 'the truth as an Encounter' (cf. Martin Buber), can one expect to be able to relate—in love—to one's neighbour. "Eternity scatters the crowd by giving each an infinite weight, by making him heavy, as an individual. For what in eternity is the highest blessing, is also the deepest seriousness. What there, is the most blessed comfort, is also the most appalling responsibility."[35]

Only thus, alone before God, alone with his conscience, free and subject to no-one, is he a fully responsible servant to his neighbour. Only thus can he be expected to be ready and 'open' to this absurd, teleological suspension of the ethical (the immanent and 'relative') in which finally, Justice is to be found. Kierkegaard refers to the Jew, to Abraham, the father of Israel, as the Father this faith. It is this faith in the divine command that makes us free and sovereign:

> [The] self acquires a new quality or qualification in the fact that it is the self directly in the sight of God. This self is no longer the merely human self but is what I would call, hoping not to be misunderstood, the theological self, the self directly in the sight of God. And what an infinite reality this self acquires by being before God! A herdsman who (if this were possible) is a self only in the sight of cows is a very low self, and so also is a ruler who is a self in the sight of slaves—for in both cases the scale or measure is lacking. The child, who hitherto has had only the parents to measure himself by, becomes a self when he is a man by getting the state as a measure.[36]

By getting this strange God and his divine command as a measure, an infinite accent falls upon the self. Evans repeats after Kierkegaard: "A respect and reverence for transcendent divine commands in fact fosters a genuine autonomy; an individual who hears the call of God is an individual who may break with established social norms for the sake of the good."[37] God

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[35] Søren Kierkegaard, *Purity of heart is to will one thing*, Radford: Wilder Publication 2008, p. 104.

[36] Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto death*, p. 79. (SKS 11, 193)

[37] C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard's ethic of love. Divine commands & moral obligations*, Oxford: Oxford UP 2006, p. 304. In line with Kierkegaard, recent literature focused on this more positive interpretation of the divine command: Robert Adams, 'Divine commands and the social nature of obligation' in M. Beaty, C. Fisher en M. Nelson (eds.) *Christian Theism and moral philosophy*, Macon: Mercer UP 1998); 'Religious ethics in a pluralistic society', in: G. Outka en J. P. Reeder (Eds.) *Prospect for a Common Morality*, Princeton: Princeton UP 1993. Philip Quin, 'The divine command ethics in Kierkegaard's Works of Love', in: J. Jordan en D. Howard-Snyder (Eds.), *Faith, Freedom and Rationality*, Lanham:

is not a ruthless Tiran who eliminates freedom: "but a ruler who extends to his subjects the dignity of becoming what we might call his partners."[38] Without the royal law, 'the good law', this thorn in the flesh, individual freedom remains nothing but an empty concept, and giving love withers away in desiring *Eros*, in humanism, 'reconciliation' and in the economy of the self.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the dialectical configuration of Hegel's speculations precludes him from interpreting Jewish faith and religion in its own right. One possible objection to this critical evaluation of Hegel's account of Judaism remains to be discussed. Various scholars are of the opinion that his evaluation changed during the years, and that he did not sustain his clearly anti-Semitic ideas characteristic of the early work. In the *Philosophy of Right* (1821), in a famous footnote to §270, Hegel speaks out for Jewish Emancipation. The exclusion, he says, of Jews from civic life was the 'highest folly', and the emancipatory measures of 1812 (the Jews were given citizenship rights) were in fact 'wise and honourable'. Many commentators have argued that this clearly shows how Hegel's perspective on Judaism had changed during the years from a negative to a positive approach. His state, it is thought, is indeed a state of reconciliation, and it is genuinely pluralistic and inclusive, fully recognizing the humanity of the Jews. "Hegel's state, as an articulated unity and totality, would affirm and preserve difference in its difference."[39]

However, his straightforward aversion to Judaism and his support of civil equality are not necessarily inconsistent with each other. Other explanations are possible and plausible. Hegel's praise of the emancipation Edict was less purely principled than Williams implies, and it was not simply a generous, non-reciprocal gift (with nothing in return), as has been shown recently by (among others) Yovel and Markell.[40] It was an

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Rowman and Littlefield 1996); 'Kierkegaard's Christian ethics', in: A. Hannay and G. Marino (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Kierkegaard*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1998.

[38] Evans, *Kierkegaard's ethic of love*, p. 129.

[39] Robert Williams, *Hegel's Ethics of Recognition*, Berkeley: UCP 1993, p. 333.

[40] For a further account of the continuity between Hegel's early and mature positions, see: Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Dark Riddle: Hegel, Nietzsche and the Jews*, University Park: Pennsylvania State UP 1998; Yovel, 'Hegels Begriff der Religion und die Religion der Erhabenheit', *Theologie und Philosophie* 51, no. 4 (1976): pp. 512–537; Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2003, pp. 123–151.

active effort to reshape Jewish identity, by making it more useful to the state, and by making it more in conformity to German culture. By granting Jews citizenship rights, the Jewish identity ('this state within a state') was to be weakened and dissolved, because their assimilation was a condition to the realization of the harmony and unity of the state:

> Far from being a simple 'release' or 'Freigabe' that affirms Jews as coequal others in their difference, Jewish emancipation (both in history and for Hegel) was part of the process of nation- and state building in Prussia and other German lands; and even when it liberated Jews from some restrictions, it also subjected them to novel forms of subordination precisely in order to secure the sovereign self-image of Germans—albeit indirectly, by facilitating identification with a supposedly sovereign state.[41]

As we have seen, Hegel's harsh judgment on Jewish faith comes down to his rejection of one of its most prominent characteristics: the divine command. Judaism is a religion based upon obedience to authority, rather than upon ethics. This (supposedly) slave-like submission is exemplified by Abraham, but also by the story of Job, whose self-renunciation in dust and ashes reflects the typically Jewish acknowledgment of the absolute sovereignty of the 'hidden God'. This theological spirit accounts for the spirit of parochialism and separatism that Hegel (systematically) attributes to Judaism, and that he regarded as a potential threat to the holiness and sovereignty of the state. As we have seen, Hegel's analysis certainly underwent some transformation, yet the modifications should not be overestimated. "Hegel's view of the limitations of Jewish theology was not substantially altered, nor was his view of its ultimate anachronism and the necessity of its supersession."[42]

But what is the purpose of this critique, this re-evaluation of the Jewish pathos? Why should this 'Jewish Wisdom', this 'abstract universality' (L2 27, 683/575), be of any concern, not just to the any 'shareholder in the System' (Kierkegaard), but also to the more scrupulous and honest Hegel scholar? We are no Abraham, Isaac or Sarah. Why would Job's self-renunciation have anything to do with modern ethics? Of course, most of us will never have quite the same mystical experience of Gods presence in the way Abraham experienced it. However, a special revelation like the one he had does not seem to be the only way to experience the divine

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[41] Markell, *Bound by Recognition*, p. 127. Cf. E. Benbassa and J. C. Attias, *Le Juif et l'autre*, Paris: Editions du Relié 2002, pp. 110–135.

[42] Idem, p. 140.

command and to appreciate its meaning. Sometimes it is a text from the Bible that suddenly speaks to us. Suddenly this text appears to be urgently relevant for the special circumstances in which we stand and feel obliged to act. In openness to the situation at hand, and in relation to the eternal perspective, we suddenly seem to 'see' what it is that we have to do; as if God himself whispered it to us by means of a divine command.

The relevancy of the divine commandment can also be seen in relation to the epiphany of God in the command that is represented by the face of the other. This ethical dimension has been thematized in the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. One encounters the Other face-to-face, that is, in the encounter with the face of the other: the widow, the orphan or the stranger (cf. Lev. 18; 19, Jes. 2; 17, Jer. 7; 6, Deutr. 27; 19). "It is always starting from the Face, from the responsibility for the other, that justice appears."[43] Prior to the ontology of the subject, and prior to any conceptual and totalitarian onto-theology of God, the ethical relation, the primary experience of the encounter with the face installs in us an infinite responsibility. Jacques Derrida, who was very much influenced by Levinas, elaborated on him at this point. 'Every other is wholly other':

> If God is completely other, the figure or name of the wholly other, then every other (one) is every (bit) other. Tout autre est tout autre. This formula disturbs Kierkegaard's discourse on one level while at the same time reinforcing its most extreme ramifications. It implies that God, as the wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other. And since each of us, everyone else, each other is infinitely other in its absolute singularity, inaccessible, solitary, transcendent, non-manifest, originally non-present to my ego [...], then what can be said about Abraham's relation to God can be said of my relation to every other (one) as every (bit) other, in particular my relation to my neighbour or my loved ones who are as inaccessible to me, as secret and transcendent as Yahweh.[44]

Of course, we are no Abraham, Isaac or Sarah—who seem to have been directly in touch with their Lord. We do however relate to their inspiration. Even if we do not have faith in God as they had, even if he is absent to us and 'dead', God, the wholly-Other never ceases to inspire ethics and philosophy. The day-to-day experience of the appeal of the face seems to

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[43] Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre nous. On thinking-of-the-Other*, transl. M. B. Smith and B. Harshav, New York: Columbia University Press 1998, pp. 104, 107.

[44] Jacques Derrida, 'Donner la mort' in: *L'etique du don, Jacques Derrida et la pensée du don*, Paris: Métailié-Transition 1992, pp. 76–77; *The gift of death*, transl. David Wills, London / Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1995, pp. 77–78.

command us in this selfsame way. "What the knights of good conscience don't realize is that 'the sacrifice of Isaac' illustrates [...] the most common and everyday experience of responsibility."[45] Like the Other, the other is infinitely other; its asymmetry forbids any reduction (*negation*) to sameness, and so it prohibits any ethics of recognition. The other is no other-self (an *alter-ego* or an *extended self*) whose autonomous and totalitarian economy neatly accommodates and relativises the command as being merely a 'grammatical form'; an all too austere form, that as such is entirely irrelevant and totally unacceptable for modern, rational ethics.[46] We can only be expected to be able to love and serve (that is: to be truly sovereign in love and forgiveness), when we thus experience the other's commanding appeal to us.

[45] Derrida, 'Donner la mort', p. 66; *The gift of death*, p. 67.

[46] Cf. James Rachels, *Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 2e Ed., New York: McGraw Hill 1993, pp. 9–14; 44–50.

HEGEL AND THE ROMAN RELIGION: THE RELIGION OF EXPEDIENCY AND PURPOSIVENESS

Bart Labuschagne

1. Introduction

Already in the title of the chapter in which he deals with the Roman religion, Hegel indicates that he considers this religion as a religion of 'expediency,' (*Zweckmäßigkeit*) or—in the introductory remarks—as a religion of 'purposiveness.'[1] As will be become clear in this contribution, Hegel actually in doing so captured the essence of the Roman religion quite well, this being acknowledged by subsequent modern Roman religious scholarship.[2] Hegel devotes the entire first section of his treatment of the Roman religion to this concept of purposiveness. Gods are reduced to means, whereby the purposes for which the gods are served fall entirely within the human sphere. In Roman religion, the principle *Do ut des* prevails.

Intertwined with this notion of expediency and purposiveness, Hegel treats the Roman religion as the religion in which the two previously discussed determinate religions, the Greek and the Jewish religion, are united. Roman religion "comprised the religion of beauty and the religion of sublimity." (L2 27, 687/579) In this unification, that obviously did not succeed very well, the ground is prepared for the Christian religion: the

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[1] The term *Zweckmäßigkeit* is translated both as 'expediency' and 'purposiveness.' When used as a title for his treatment of Roman religion, it is translated by Hodgson as 'expediency,' but in the textual exposition it is more commonly referred to as 'purposiveness' (and *zweckmäßich* as 'purposive'), thus preserving the affinity with 'purpose' (*Zweck*). Literally, *Zweckmäßigkeit* means 'conformity to an end or purpose.' Hegel's use of the term is directly influenced by Kant's discussion of extrinsic purposiveness and natural teleology in *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. J. C. Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007), §§63, 66, 79–86. Since, in the context of Hegel's treatment of the Roman religion, *Zweckmäßigkeit* refers to extrinsic rather than intrinsic purposiveness, 'expediency' is an appropriate translation for it (cf. Hodgson in an editorial footnote in L2 M, 190; footnote 229).

[2] Reinhard Leuze, *Die außerchristlichen Religionen bei Hegel*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1975, p. 228 mentions G. Mensching, *Die Religion, Erscheinungsformen, Strukturtypen und Lebensgesetze*, Stuttgart: Schwab 1959, pp. 23–25, K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, München: Beck 1967², p. 47. All these authors refer positively to Hegel's characterization of the Roman religion as one of *Zweckerfüllung*, that is: as a fulfilment of an aim.

consummate (or revelatory, revealed, absolute) religion, in Hegel's view. This second major characteristic of the Roman religion as the breeding ground of Christianity appears here, in that it produced a "monstrous misery and a universal sorrow, a sorrow that prepared the birth pangs of the religion of truth."[3] In Hegel's view, the Roman religion as such served a higher purpose: a function that has to do with the world-historical role the Roman religion has played as the context in which Christianity came to birth. 'Purposiveness' gains therefore a much deeper meaning, that is: not only is purposiveness a central characteristic of the creed and the codes of Roman religion in which *Do ut des* prevails, but the Roman religion as such served a higher meaning, a higher purpose: that of being the deliverer of the religion of true freedom and reconciliation between man and God.

In this contribution, an analysis will be made of the textual material that has come to us. Because Hegel never published a treatise—but undoubtedly planned to, until his sudden death in November 1831—we can only construct his views from the text of Hegel's original (unpublished) manuscript of 1821, which served as the basis for his Lectures, and from the transcriptions of the several Lectures Hegel delivered on the philosophy of religion in the years 1824, 1827 and 1831.[4] Although Hegel's treatment of the Roman religion remained relatively constant through the period in which Hegel lectured on the subject than that of any other religion, its exact relation and function with regard to the previous determinate religions (especially the Greek and the Jewish) differed significantly. How this should be interpreted and understood, is our first task to be undertaken (2). Next, an analysis is made of the content of Hegel's treatment of the Roman religion in these Lectures (3). Finally, a conclusion is reached in which the results of this inquiry into Hegel's view of the Roman religion are briefly summarized, in light of a reflection on the meaning of Hegel's perceptions for our present age (4).

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[3] L2 27, 699/591, footnote 544, which indicates that this text stems from the transcripts of Hegel's Lecture of 1831, the last he was to give on the philosophy of religion. In this contribution, I will pay attention to the problem of the discrepancies between the several versions of Hegel's Lectures; they have no serious consequences for Hegel's treatment—and our understanding of it—of the Roman religion.

[4] See for an extensive treatment of this problem: Peter C. Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', in: Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. The Lectures of 1827*, One-Volume Edition, Ed. by Peter C. Hodgson, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006, pp. 7 ff.

2. The Formal Treatment of the Roman Religion in the Texts of 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831

The Manuscript of 1821

In Part II of the *Manuscript* of 1821, titled: *Determinate Religion*, Hegel describes the ways in which the concept of religion (as it was treated in Part I, the *Concept of Religion*) is to be "grasped in its determinate aspects," that is: how these aspects constitute the "forms of consciousness of the absolute idea."[5] In fact, this part II can be read as a phenomenology of religion, of how the concept actually took shape in concrete, historical religions. Two sets of categorical principles were applied by Hegel to order these determinate religions, one internal and analytical, and one external. The internal set identifies three moments of religion: aspects that can be discerned in every historical religion under scrutiny. These are 1) the abstract or metaphysical concept of divinity, 2) the ways in which the divine is known representationally in concrete texts and symbols of the religion concerned and 3) the practical relationship in which communion with the divinity is established: the cultus of this religion. This division is applied more or less consequently in Hegel's treatment of all determinate religions; the passages on the Roman religion are also arranged in this threefold, internal classification: the first part bears the title *The Concept of Purposiveness*, the second part *The Configuration of Gods* and finally the third part *The Cultus*.

The external set, on the other side, arranges the whole part of the *Determinate Religion* into a triad corresponding to the fundamental moments of logic, these being: being, essence, and concept.[6] However, in the case of the determinate religions, these categories are applied in the mode of determinateness and finitude. These two are the key in which the moments of logic are tuned. The result is that the logical triad is operated in the following way: 1) pre-reflective immediacy or undifferentiated substance (the Oriental religions of nature), 2) differentiation in the form of particularity (the Jewish religion) and necessity (Greek religion),[7] and

[5] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', p. 17.

[6] This according to the structure of Hegel's *Kleine Logik* (the 'smaller logic', laid down in Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften*, Berlin 1831). See more on these fundamental notions the next paragraph, where we will discuss this Hegelian logic more extensively.

[7] The title of this second part of the *Determinate religion* in the *Manuscript* however is *The Religion of Sublimity and Beauty*, but the themes of particularity and necessity are treated extensively in it.

finally 3) external purposiveness (Roman religion). In contrast to Hegel's treatment of the Oriental religions of nature, to which Hegel actually did pay not very much attention, his treatment of the Roman religion is quite extensive. Under the title of *The Religion of Expediency or Understanding*, this religion is represented as the apotheosis of finitude, and thus prepares the transition from all the finite religions to the Christian religion.[8]

The Lectures of 1824

Part II of the 1824 Lectures is rearranged and has gained a considerable volume, both in scope and content in comparison to the *Manuscript*. The most obvious structural difference is that *Determinate religion* is divided into two rather than three main sections. Jewish, Greek, and Roman religion are all included now in the second main part, which bears the title *The Religions of Spiritual Individuality* (leaving *Immediate Religion, or Nature Religion* under the practically same heading as he did previously), distinguished according to the diverse ways in which divine purpose actualises itself in relation to finite spirit: as particular (Jewish), plural (Greek) and universal (Roman). Determinate religion no longer consists of an inner triad, as in: the nature religions, finite spirit, and external purposiveness, but now forms the first two parts of a much larger triad: nature religions, the religions of spiritual individuality, and consummate religion that culminates in Christianity.[9] Interesting to note is that this culmination does not take the shape of a progressive advancement, since finite religion ends in total decay, degeneration and death. The Roman religion is, in this scheme, exactly this ultimate, finite religion *par excellence*.

At the same time, however, Hegel altered the internal set of categorical principles significantly. Hegel drops entirely the analytical scheme of 'abstract concept', 'concrete representation' and 'community / cultus'—obviously for the reason that it did not work out very well for the Christian religion. He altered the inner triad that he used in the *Manuscript* into genuinely trinitarian moments, which can be identified as three elements of the self-development of the idea of God: a) the idea of God in and for itself (in the immanent Trinity: symbolized by the figure 'Father'), b) representation and appearance (creation, fall, and reconciliation, the work of the 'Son'), c) the communion of faith among the believers (its origin, subsistence, and worldly actualization, which is the work of the 'Spirit').

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[8] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', p. 17.
[9] Idem, p. 20.

As far as the Roman religion is concerned, the internal structure of the chapter dealing with it assumed its definitive form, returning in all subsequent Lectures: a) *The Concept of Necessity and External Purpose*, b) *The Configuration of the Gods*, and c) *The Cultus*. However, Hegel's treatment of the actual content of the Roman religion did not change very much, as was the case with the Greek religion.[10]

The Lectures of 1827

Remarkably, a threefold distinction among the several forms of the *Determinate Religion* reminiscent of the *Manuscript* seemed to return in the Lectures of 1827. However, the basis of the division is not any longer the logical categories of being, essence and concept, but rather the interplay of nature and spirit. Hegel was obviously unable to provide a convincing justification for this logic-inspired categorization, and resorted to a structure in which the Roman religion gained once again a moment of its own. The three stages that Hegel now presents in these 1827 Lectures are: 1) religion as the unity of the spiritual and the natural (*Immediate or Nature Religion*), 2) the elevation of the spiritual above the natural (*The religion of the Greeks and the Jews*),[11] and 3) the religion in which purposiveness is not yet spiritual (*The Religion of Expediency: Roman Religion*). This last religion can also be labelled the religion of fate or destiny, because it is devoid of any spirit whatsoever.[12] This aspect is reminiscent of the title under which the Roman religion was treated in the *Manuscript*, that is: *The Religion of Expediency and Understanding*.

The Lectures of 1831

Many more innovations occurred in part II, due to the fact that Hegel was obviously not satisfied with his treatment of the *Determinate Religion*. The threefold division of the *Manuscript* and and the Lectures of 1827 was retained, although no longer based *either* on the dialectic of being, essence and concept *or* on the interplay between nature and spirit. Rather the operative triad is based on a new paradigm, that of immediacy, rupture, and reconciliation. These categories are less based on typically

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[10] Idem, p. 21.

[11] Actually, the title as a whole is: *The Elevation of the Spiritual above the Natural: the Religion of the Greeks and the Jews*. Note that the sequence of the treatment of the Jewish and the Greek religion is reversed.

[12] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', p. 23.

logic concepts, but rather descriptive of the general life of the concept and of the dialectic of consciousness—a dialectic that is taken into the divine life as it unfolds phenomenologically in the apparition of determinate religions and becomes genuinely trinitarian only in the Christian religion. First, as natural religion, there exists a relationship of immediacy between consciousness and its object. In fact, according to Hegel, this is only the case in magic, which is not yet properly religious. Religion only emerges with the inward cleavage or rupture of consciousness, so that consciousness is aware of the gulf between its own transitory being and that of God as absolute power. The third stage entails the overcoming of this cleavage by way of a reconciliation of consciousness and its object in a higher, more mediated level. Moreover, it is on this level that freedom becomes actual for the first time.

In this phase, the subject knows himself to be free in relation to the divine object.[13] This is the religion of freedom proper or Greek religion. However, since the subject has not yet passed through the infinite antithesis between good and evil, and since the gods are not yet infinite spirit, the reconciliation that is tried here, is not complete. Nor is it completed by Roman religion, which results instead in infinite unhappiness, anguish and servitude—indeed the birth pangs of the religion of true freedom and true reconciliation. Interesting to note is that the Roman religion is included under the category of 'freedom'—which is a definitely more benevolent characterisation than earlier ones: as a religion of the understanding, of finitude, ending in total decay, degeneration, death, fate and destiny, devoid of spirit.[14]

With regard to the Roman religion, our conclusion so far should be that only the formal place and role of the Roman religion as a transitional religion between all other determinate religions and Christianity has remained constant. In all texts, Roman religion is the last and ultimate representative of the determinate religion as such.

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[13] A more precursory, transitional phase occurs as one in which, in reaction against the confusion of the natural and the spiritual in the previous, unmediated phase, subjectivity seeks to establish itself in its unity and universality. Hegel here discusses the religion of the good (Persian and Jewish), the religion of anguish (Phoenician), and the religion of ferment (Egyptian).

[14] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', pp. 24, 25.

3. An Analysis of the Content of Hegel's Treatment of the Roman Religion in the Texts of 1821, 1824, 1827 and 1831

Introduction

As already has been said, Hegel's treatment of the Roman religion in all texts is quite steady, with the exception of the *Manuscript* of 1821, which is much more elaborated. The subsequent texts are much briefer, and only highlight the main points discussed in the *Manuscript.* In fact, Hegel's interpretation of the Roman religion remained more constant through the eleven-year period of his Lectures than that of any other religion. Hegel was thoroughly familiar with Roman authors and draws a great deal on them. Among the secondary sources, he relied mostly on Karl Philipp Moritz's *Anthousia; oder, Roms Alterthümer* (Part I 1791, Part II 1796),[15] although he was in fundamental disagreement with it. Hegel worked out his own vision in great detail in the *Manuscript*, and in the subsequent Lectures simply summarized the essential aspects.[16] Therefore, we will concentrate ourselves on the *Manuscript* first, as well as on the other subsequent Lectures.

The Manuscript of 1821

Hegel devoted some fourteen sheets on the Roman religion in the manuscript, which is nearly half the number used for the whole of Part III on the Christian religion. He seemed to have been preoccupied in 1821 with the decadence of the Roman religion and empire, to which he compared his own age in rather apocalyptical tones at the end of his Lectures.[17] More importantly was, however, that he was working out for the first time his own interpretation of this religion, especially of the fundamental differences between Greek and Roman religion. Hegel opposed the commonly held view that the two were essentially similar. In fact, his most important secondary source, Moritz's *Anthousia*, in which this view was condensed, was used by Hegel as his primary target. Hegel used the detailed information on the Roman gods and festivals provided by Moritz to refute Moritz. Finally, Hegel took a great deal of effort to understand the transition from

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[15] Yvonne Pauly (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke; kritische und kommentierte Ausgabe*, Tübingen: Niemeyer 2005.

[16] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', loc. cit.

[17] Reference to these apocalyptical tones is made in L3 M, 159–160/95–96.

the Roman to the Christian religion, and in what way it closes the cycle of the finite religions.

The transition from Greek (and Jewish) religion to Roman religion, with which Hegel's analysis starts, represents for Hegel the transition from essence to concept, and more specifically, from necessity to purpose. Necessity, according to Hegel, has no *inner* purpose, but only the formal requirement that there be *some* content, outcome or activity. The coherence of necessity is merely that of an external cause-effect relationship, whereas the coherence of the concept (to which the transition is made in this part) is that of internal purposiveness or intentionality.[18] With inwardly purposive action "nothing is produced that is not already there beforehand." (L2 M, 192/98) Hence, purposive action is free action, action in which consciousness is at home with itself. Such action presupposes a distinction between purpose and reality—that is, between end and means—but also an inner connection or coherence.[19] "Purpose is the power to dispose of means, the power that has at the same time an initial content determined in and for itself, a content that is both starting point and goal, the mode of necessity that has taken the external, particular content into itself and holds it fast against reality, which is defined in a negative manner, and reduced to the rank of means." (L2 M, 192/98)

In Hegel's view, this distinction between purpose and reality, end and means, did not fully emerge in Greek religion: the gods there are the powers of reality, not a purpose. In Roman religion however, purpose and reality stood in unresolved contradiction, while in the Christian religion the distinction has been overcome and sublated.[20] In other words, the purposiveness that is found in Roman religion is *finite* and *external* in character. The purpose is realized or carried out through something alien to it; a means is utilized that has no intrinsic connection with the end, with the intentional act. This is the sort of relationship that is grasped by the "understanding" (*Verstand*), as opposed to the concept. "But, to begin with, the purpose itself is still immediate, formal. Its first categorical determination is that what is thus inwardly determinate should exist on its own account, initially in opposition to reality, and that it should realize itself in reality as something that resists. In other words it is initially a finite purpose, and the relationship [of divine purpose to the world] is

[18] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction' to L2, 26.
[19] Idem, p. 27.
[20] Idem.

a relationship of the understanding, and the religion that has this kind of foundation is the *religion of the understanding*." (L2 M, 194/100)

Hegel then asks, of what kind are these finite purposes? "They are to be sought in the natural and spiritual world, not in the nature of God himself, because they are finite. And for this reason the definition of them lies outside of God, and God is seen as an understanding, operating in nature, that orders and regulates them." (L2 M, 195/101) Roman gods are expedients that oversee, regulate, and protect the full range of human activities and purposes, especially those of a political and commercial character. This is the utterly utilitarian, practical, prosaic religion; specific human needs, such as happiness, satisfaction, self-seeking, define the content of the Roman gods. In this respect, the Roman religion is fundamentally different from the Greek, which exists in "the realm of free beauty, joyous festival, and the enjoyment of divinity." (L2 M, 207/113) The Greeks worship their gods for the sake of the gods, the Romans for the sake of humanity. The Roman attitude of consciousness is not theoretical, i.e. "it does not consist in a free intuition of objectivity, or free veneration of the divine powers, but in *practical* self-seeking, the quest for the fulfilment of the singularity of this life. (. . .) Here [we find] on the contrary a preoccupation with finite purposes, an earthbound religion of [finite purposes]." (L2 M, 207/113) In other words, it consists only of a practical assessment of their own subjective, contingent needs. "Every human final end, no matter how inwardly insignificant it may be (to feed oneself, make life more agreeable, etc.), gives one the right to sacrifice natural things or animal life as much as one will without ado; (. . . .)." (L2 M, 208/113–114) The objective of Roman cultus lies entirely in the subjective sphere. It regards only subjective interests. "The worshippers' needs and requirements and the dependence that they create are what make them pious, and their cultus consists in positing a *power* to help them in their need." (L2 M, 210/116)

Hegel then moves on to a more detailed analysis of the cultus of the religion of expediency, especially with regard to two spheres of human interests: the state and politics on the one hand, and agriculture and general welfare on the other. The purpose of the Roman cultus is, first and foremost, political: it serves the interests of the Roman Empire. "In regard to the state, concrete cases, singular actual [fortunes play the same role] as a prosperous harvest in regard to nature." (L2 M, 211–212/117) In fact, Hegel contends that this religion contains within it the more specific aspects "needed to become a *political* religion." (L2 M, 211/117) A principal goal of such a religion is the state and its fortune and well-being. "(T)he worship of the gods and thanksgiving is prosaically attached to partly to singular

determinate situations (salvation in cases of need) and actual events" The Roman deity above all others, the deity *par excellence* is the goddess Fortuna; not necessity, nor chance, nor providence, but instead universal prosperity (*Glück*) of the Roman Empire. Hegel devotes an entire section to this goddess. (L2 M, 212–215/118–121)

Beyond this are the general human requirements and activities that make human life prosper, such as harvest, fertility, crafts, trade, travel etc. In all these domains a host of deities appear, who are worshipped in special festivals. "Of this kind was the worship accorded to Ops Consiva, the consort of Saturn, a mysterious goddess who stores within herself the seeds from which all plants come, and ripens them. (…) The bounteous fruitfulness of nature in all its manifold aspects [gave rise to] a large number of fertility and crafts festivals." (L2 M, 217/122) Hegel mentions several examples, e.g. Jupiter, who had a special altar on the Capitoline hill as Jupiter Pistor ("the baker"), or Fornax, the goddess of the oven, who presided over the parching of the corn in the ovens. In addition, there were festivals of Vesta, to ensure that the fire should serve for the baking of the bread, of the Ambarvalia, a procession around the fields, of the Suovetaurilia (festival of swine, sheep, and bulls), and so on. All these were regarded by Hegel as a matter of utility, of prosaic powers.

However, beneath all this is a fundamental fear of harm and disaster: "There are times of prosperity, but equally there are times of disaster. In this prosaic awareness of the antithesis and of finitude, the harmful just as much as the useful takes on a fixed shape (…). It takes the form of something fearful (the powers of evil)." (L2 M, 218/123) This is why Hegel asserts—in a strained but unmistakable allusion to Schleiermacher—that Roman religion is based on a "feeling of dependence," which, in developed form, leads to veneration of the power of evil and worship of the devil. However, "(i)t is only particular kinds of harm that one is frightened of at this stage, particular evils to which one bows the knee. Inasmuch as it is a negative, this concrete outcome is a situation; it exists as a concrete negative without any inner substantive content, without inward universality." (L2 M, 219/124) Allegorical, prosaic essences of this kind, however, are primarily and essentially those which are characterised by a shortcoming, harm, or damage. "For example, the Romans dedicated altars to the plague, and also to fever, Febris, and the goddess Angerona, care and woe. They venerated hunger, Fames, and Robigo, wheat rust." Moreover, he continues to wonder, "(it) is hard to grasp that things of this kind are worshipped as divine. In such images every proper aspect of divinity is lost; it is only the feeling of dependence and fear that can turn them into

something objective." (M219/124) And finally: "(o)nly the total loss of all idea, the evaporation of all truth, can hit upon such way of representing divinity, and they can be comprehended only [through the recognition] that spirit has come to dwell entirely in [the realm of] the finite, of what is immediately useful." (L2 M, 219–220/124) Interesting to note is that Hegel concludes the section on this negativity "that this is where the roots of superstition are to be found. Generally speaking, superstition consists in treating something finite and external, some ordinary actuality just as it stands, as a *power*, a substance. Superstition stems from the oppressed state of the spirit, from a feeling of dependence in its purposes; it cannot free itself from its purposes and as a logical consequence defines the negative upon which they are dependent as something that is as temporal and finite as they are." (L2 M, 220/125) In contrast, other religions (such as the Persian, Hindu and Greek religion) are *free* in the presence of their God, and it is only outside religion that they are dependent.

The Romans have made of their religion a thing of enslavement. Enslavement to finitude and death, in fact. This becomes clear when we look at the Roman festivals and spectacles, which consisted in large-scale slaughter of beasts and men, a massacre that was purposeless and staged merely for the entertainment of the spectators. "The spilling of rivers of real blood and battles to the death were the spectacles the Romans loved best. (…) They wanted this external, simple story of death, without meaning, the quintessence of everything external, the arid process of a *natural* death by violence of natural means, not death produced by an ethical power." (L2 M, 222/127) Moreover: "(f)or the Romans this prosaic pattern of spiritless butchery, cold and arid, constituted the supreme event of history, the highest manifestation of the fate which for the Greeks [had been] essentially an *ethical* transformation. To die imperturbably, through an irrational caprice having the force of necessity, (…) was the ultimate and unique virtue that Roman patricians could exercise, (…)." (L2 M, 223/127) The gods warded off death as long as possible, but in the end, death ultimately prevails. Death is the one true divinity for the Romans, "the final mark of finitude for the religion that venerates 'unbounded finitude,' 'spuriously infinite' finitude."[21]

In the last section, Hegel analyses the role of the emperors in the Roman religion and how this final and ultimate determinate religion prepared the ground for Christianity. Hegel notices that the Romans worshiped their

[21] Idem.

emperors almost as gods, or at least as if they were gods. "Inasmuch as the content of the divine purpose consisted for them in finite human purposes, and the power over such purposes and the directly actual external circumstances was what made up the good fortune of the Roman Empire, the obvious next step was to worship the *present* power over such a purpose, the *individual* presence of that good fortune, as a god in whose hands it rested." (L2 M, 223/128) Especially the role of the emperor, as an exceptional individual, could be described as an "arbitrary power over the life and happiness of individuals and whole cities." Together with the imperial guard, the imperial will constituted the goddess Fortuna.

For the Romans, immersed as they were in finitude, "there was nothing higher that this individual, this power over their finite purposes." (L2 M, 224/129) In fact, the finite determinate purpose, together with its power, is concentrated and determined in the present, actual will of one individual human being. "Since all are in bondage to life, one person's will is in fact the power over finite purposes, over the world; the Roman emperor is lord over the world, as long as he has guards to be the tool of this individuality; but he has only to offend these guards, and he is lost. His violent power is the death of individuality (. . .)." (L2 M, 225/130) Further on Hegel remarks: "Power is completely determined, as singularity, but the universal moment has escaped. What is present is the world of outward happiness and the power over it—a monstrous *un*happiness. What is lacking is that power should be completely determined in such a way as to make it determinately determinate, in other words that the individual should become subjectivity, actually present, should become something inward, something inwardly substantive." (L2 M, 225/130) In this respect, the Roman world is the most important point of transition to the Christian religion; in fact, it is the indispensable link to it. (L2 M, 226/130)

The religion of external purposiveness closes the cycle of the finite religions. The step of which the Roman religion consists of before the transition to the Christian religion is not a positive, but a negative step. Finite religion does not evolve progressively into infinite religion, but cycles back upon it. "The 'necessity' of Roman religion is that the *highest* form of finitude is the *worst*, issuing in the absolute *un*happiness and grief of spirit, despite the Romans' constant preoccupation with happiness, gratification, success."[22] This is what happens when the slogan of Protagoras 'man is the measure of all things', the human being with his immediate wishes,

[22] Idem, p. 29.

desires, purposes, interests, feelings etcetera, is elevated to a universal standard. "We behold the complete disappearance of all beautiful, ethical organic life and the crumbling away into finitude of all desires, purposes, and interests—a crumbling away into momentary enjoyment and pleasure, a human animal kingdom from which all higher elements have been abstracted." (L2 M, 229/134) Moreover: "[i]t is a crumbling away into mere finitudes—finite existences, wishes and interests—which for that very reason are held together only by the inwardly boundless violence of the despot, the singular will whose instrument is the cold-blooded, spiritless death of individual citizens, the negative that is as immediate as their wishes, brought to bear upon them and holding them in fear of him. He is the One, the actually present God—himself the singularity of the divine will as the power over all the other infinitely many singular wills." (L2 M, 229/134)

It is only when finitude has played itself out to the end that God and the world can be reconciled through God in the shape of a single human being. God acquires present actuality, and the world is transfigured in its finitude. However, the religion in which this occurred could not arise in the Greco-Roman world. Although this world discovered the unity of thought, it did not know it in the form of a "community principle," (L2 M, 231/136) that is, while there might have been philosophical intuitions of the One, they were incapable of taking on the concrete life of a religious community and cultus. "Thus Christianity arose among the Jewish people when that people encountered the 'finitude of the West' and the age-old grief of the world."[23]

The Lectures of 1824

Compared to the lengthy treatment of the Roman religion in the *Manuscript*, its treatment here in the 1824 Lectures is relatively short. Due to the entirely different structure of the *Determinate religion*, the Roman religion no longer comprises in its own, separate treatment in a chapter, but is now treated as a mere appendage to section B, *The Religions of Spiritual Individuality*, as the third in a row, after the Jewish and the Greek religion. The concept of purposiveness is no longer reserved exclusively for the Roman religion, but is attributed to the Jewish and Greek as well. These two religions are now also considered under the category

[23] Idem, p. 30, Hegel, loc. cit.

of purposiveness. No longer is the movement from Jewish and Greek to Roman religion viewed as a transition from power to necessity to purpose (as in the *Manuscript*), but as a movement from exclusive (or singular) to plural to universal (though external and finite) purposiveness. That is: from exclusive purposiveness, where the Jewish God is one and almighty but confined to a particular people, to a plurality of purposes in Greek religion where the gods express a multitude of purposes (and where in fact necessity is purposeless), to a universal purpose—a purpose that is as universal as necessity itself but at the same time empirical, external, and political in character, namely: world dominion of the Roman empire. And because of its finitude and externality, it becomes necessity itself, or better: fate (*Fatum*). The holiness and transcendence of Jewish faith is lost, as well as the beauty and freedom of the Greek religion. Roman religion is the religion of "unfreedom" because human beings have become dependent on a host of finite deities that control every facet of human life, these deities being abstractions, and in fact not spiritual individualities.[24] Hence, Roman religion actually does not fit properly under the category of the title of this second section of the *Determinate Religion*, namely *The Religions of Spiritual Individuality*, but because Hegel envisaged only two moments before dealing with the Christian religion, the Roman religion had to be treated there as the last station, providing a transition to Christianity by depicting the collapse of finite religion in and upon itself.

After a short introduction, Hegel discusses in section a) the concept of necessity and external purpose. Stress is laid on the externality of the purpose, even on its empirical content: "What makes it empirical is its content; and this next mode of universality—incomplete, abstract universality—is where the empirical purpose is extended to embrace [the whole of] external reality. This purpose thus becomes a universal condition of the world, world dominion, universal monarchy. (. . .) The inherent purpose is one that is external to the individual, and it becomes ever more so the more that it is realized and externalized, so that the individual is merely subordinated to the purpose, merely *serves* it." (L2 24, 500/399)[25] This implies a unification of universal power and singularity, but a raw one, devoid of all spirit. "It is not in the realm of thought that this fulfilment is posited; it is worldly power, mere lordship, worldliness merely

[24] Idem, p. 55 and L2 24, 498/397, footnote 701.

[25] Islamic religion, Hegel tells here, also has world dominion as its purpose, but of a predominantly spiritual rather than a political one, as is the case in the Roman empire.

as lordship. (The particular) lies outside the posited unity, it is a content that lacks divinity—it is the egoism of the individual, seeking satisfaction apart from God, in particular interests. It lies outside reason; lordship stands cold and egoistic on one side, and the individual equally on the other." (L2 24, 50–501/399–400)

The discussion of the configuration of this god (imperial authority) and the gods in the second subsection (b) and the cultus in the third (c) in these 1824 Lectures is taken from the *Manuscript* but condensed. Emphasis is laid on the seriousness and functionality of the Roman religion, in contrast to the cheerfulness and serenity of the Greek religion, which was essentially free. The two necessities it serves are world dominion and the exigencies of everyday life. "Thus everyday requirements, the arts of understanding, were viewed as something essential, as gods, even though they are concerned with wholly subordinate matters, relating to everyday life, in which the only religious aspect is the formal one that these purposes have now achieved the empty shape of essentialities." (L2 24, 504/403) Again, Hegel mentions many of these gods in the texts, and wonders: "(i)t is hard for us to grasp how such things can be venerated as gods. The content can be anything, provided it appears essential for the common needs; it can be any situation, which is then comprehended without phantasy and on its own, all idealization and all living phantasy being excluded. It is consistent with this prosaic situation in regard to power that the Romans later came to worship their emperors too as gods." New gods are introduced whenever particular needs arise, be it relief from the plague, be it public sanitation, victory in battle, etc. In a word: Roman worship is a "theogony in progress." (L2 24, 509/407) Moreover, "(w)e see the Romans conquering Magna Graecia, Sicily, plundering and destroying the temples and carrying off whole shiploads of gods to Rome. In Rome there is toleration: the Syrian, Egyptian, Jewish, Christian, Greek, Persian religions, Mithraism—the Romans seize on all of them, and precisely in this fusion what gives each religion its shape, the particularity that pertains to art and phantasy, is lost." (L2 24, 507/405) In fact, "Rome becomes the pantheon in which all the gods of all the peoples are set up side by side, so that they extinguish one another; and they are all subject to the one Jupiter Capitolinus, the one necessity, or to the one Rome and her Fortuna." (L2 24, 506/404)

In discussing the cultus, Hegel first mentions the religious disposition of the believer, which amounts according to him to a political disposition: "The religious disposition as such means in Rome that lordship or the universal in general is owed to the gods; it belongs to Fortuna, to Juno or

Jupiter, to a power that is in and for itself, and which is recognized and venerated in Rome's dominion." (L2 24, 507–508/405) On the subjective side the religious pathos here is what is called Roman virtue. Subjective consciousness has only value, insofar as it concentrates itself on the salvation of the state. The second aspect of this disposition is that human beings, as concrete, have many other purposes, interests, wishes. Imagination equates real worldly purposes with the infinite. Therefore, "(t)his religion is consequently one of dependence; the prevailing feeling is one of dependence, of unfreedom." (L2 24, 508/406) According to Hegel, this dependence leads to superstition, but he does not go that far as to contend, as he did in the *Manuscript*, that this feeling of dependence ultimately leads to the veneration of evil and the worship of the devil. This indirect charge to Schleiermacher he made then, obviously could not be sustained. (L2 24, 508/406, footnote 723) The second moment of the cultus proper is characterized by the fact that the gods are recognized and reverenced in regard to the purposes that the believers want to achieve. "The Romans worship the gods because they *need* them, in other words primarily at times of stress and anxiety, i.e., because they wish to have their own narrow interests maintained as essential." (L2 24, 509/407) Lordship of power exists only as the successful accomplishment of particular purposes. Hegel closes this description, again, with an analysis of the Roman spectacles, games and festivals. In fact, nothing more than a process of death devoid of spirit, a murder game, willed by irrational caprice, serving only to give the spectators something to feast their eyes on. "This is a necessity that is mere caprice, murder without content, or having only itself for content. This and the envisagement of fate are the acme of experience, to die imperturbably through an empty caprice, not from natural causes, nor through the external force of circumstances, nor in consequence of offending against something ethical. Thus dying is the only virtue a Roman patrician could exercise, and it is one he has in common with slaves and with condemned criminals." (L2 24, 510/408)

After having briefly mentioned, again, the role of the emperor ("an individual, whose wilful caprice is inevitably devoid of right and of ethical life"), (L2 24, 511/408) Hegel concludes his treatment of the Roman religion, as a transition to the next stage, rather differently from the *Manuscript.* What we find in the Roman religion is an infinitization and universalization of the finite; the finite subject as a matter of fact. "This infinitude of subjectivity as such can be expressed more precisely as personality, the category into which a human being enters as a person in the realm of right. As a person a human being owns property, has the right

of possession. It is the person who enjoys recognition as such, but only the abstract person, the abstractly juridical person capable of ownership. It goes no further than that, and I count as infinite in this sphere only; as the infinite reference of myself to myself, I am the absolute, self-sustaining atom." (L2 24, 511–512/409)[26] In Roman religion there appears thus for the first time an infinitude of subjectivity, but only as empirical, immediate, untrue, which cannot be maintained. In this sense, there is still after all place for the Roman religion in this section B. *The Religions of Spiritual Individuality*, albeit a very abstract and limited one. In the next stage, infinite subjectivity will be taken in a much higher sense, as pertaining to the *idea*, to *absolute spirit* as it mediates itself with itself. This is the true infinite as opposed to the spurious deification of the finite ego, the most blatant form of which is worship of the Roman emperors. "The stage has been set for the confrontation between Christ and Caesar."[27]

The Lectures of 1827

Hegel's treatment of the Roman religion in the 1827 Lectures differed not much from that of 1824, both in content and length. The only remarkable differences are the transitions. Now that the religion of expediency has regained an independent status again (as section C.), just behind B. *The Elevation of the Spiritual above the Natural*, as the religion in which purposiveness is not yet spiritual. As a matter of fact, what is still lacking here, is a divine purposiveness that is holy, universal, and concrete at once. By contrasting it with the Greek and Jewish religion, Hegel once again attempts to find a proper place for the Roman religion in his phenomenology (or typology) of determinate religions. In Greek religion, concreteness in ethical content of their gods was achieved, but what was still lacking was holiness. Moreover, universality was sacrificed to multiplicity. On the other hand, the God of Israel was one and holy, but was asserted as the God of a particular people, whose laws were abstract. Roman religion, according to Hegel, was a *relative* totality, in which the Greek and Jewish religions "indeed loose their one-sidedness, but both of the principles perish conjointly, each by means of assimilation into its opposite; still, it is this very homogeneity that interests us in them. The religion of

[26] Note that this concept of the person, as bearer of rights such as property, is treated extensively by Hegel in his *Philosophy of Right* (1821). The entire first section of it, *Abstract Right*, deals with it. The Roman origin of this concept is convincingly accounted for.

[27] Hodgson, 'Editorial Introduction', L2, 56.

beauty loses the concrete individuality of its gods and hence also their ethical, independent content; the gods are reduced to means. The religion of sublimity loses the orientation toward the One, the eternal, the transcendent." (L2 27, 688/580) Due to its external, empirical, finite, utilitarian character, the universal purposiveness of the Romans is flawed. "Religion, when reduced to a means to extrinsic, worldly ends, is finally destroyed. Roman religion is the religion to end all religion—a fact symbolized by collecting the gods of all the religions into a single pantheon, where they are subjected to Jupiter Capitolinus and destroy one another, a veritable *Götterdämmerung*."[28]

The conclusion of this section is very elliptical, and therefore the transition to the next and final stage of religion, Christian religion, is very difficult to reconstruct. It reads that when the moments which subsist in contradiction and in a spiritless way are unified in Roman religion, then we shall have advanced to the "next and final stage of religion." (L2 27, 699/591) Presumably these very moments are the authentic moments of the religions of beauty and sublimity, as well as the heritage of the religions of nature—moments that have been "homogenized" in Roman religion, but not truly unified.[29] It is not for determinate religion to truly unify preceding moments.

The Lectures of 1831

The text of 1831 on the Roman religion is very short and fragmented, and consists mainly of excerpts made by David Friedrich Strauss. It need not be summarized again, because the content is virtually identical with that of the preceding Lectures, apart from some transitional nuances that will be discussed here.

Hegel makes the transition from Greek to Roman religion as follows.[30] Free spirit must come to recognize that "its value no longer consists in its being merely the free spirit of the Greeks, of the citizens of this or that state, but humanity must be known freely as humanity, and God is the God of all humanity, the comprehensive, universal spirit."[31] In fact, this happens when *one* of the limited folk-spirits "raises itself to become the fate of all the others." It does so through pretensions of universality,

[28] Idem, p. 72.
[29] Idem, p. 72.
[30] Idem, p. 86.
[31] Idem.

through the politics of world mastery and of oppression, so that other peoples would become conscious of the weakness of their gods. "The fate that overthrew the world of the Greeks was the world of Rome."

However, this fate was an advance, as a matter of fact. The way by which spirit was cleansed of its finitude was by way of the absolutization of finitude, with the ensuing result that the whole world of finite gods finally collapsed itself. "The Romans orchestrated this *Götterdämmerung*, and this was their service to the history of religion."[32] Much that was good perished as well in this collapse—the happiness, serenity, and beauty of Greek religion, and the transcendence, sublimity, and holiness of the God of Israel, the vitality and diversity of the religions of other peoples as well. In sum: "(t)his brought to naught the serene happiness of the previous religion. This abstract power [of the emperor] brought into the world the monstrous unhappiness and anguish that were to be the birthpangs for the religion of truth. It was by renouncing satisfaction in this world that the soil for the true religion was prepared. And in the fullness of time, i.e., when this state of despair had been brought about in the spirit of the world, God sent his son." (L2 31, 760/642)

Conclusion

It is clear from our investigation of Hegel's view on the Roman religion that this religion plays a pivotal role in the transition from the determinate religions to the consummate, revelatory religion: Christianity. Hegel's idea that all religions preceding Christianity in one way or another paved the way to it, more or less culminates in his treatment of the Roman religion. Hegel's contribution to the subsequent scholarly image of Roman religion is remarkably substantial, especially his characterization of it as a religion in which fulfilment of an aim plays a decisive role.[33] His deconstruction of the commonly held view, embodied in the work of Moritz,[34] according to which Greek and Roman religion are more or less alike, is of special significance. It enabled him to take a fresh and unprejudiced look at this religion, which resulted in a relatively new view on it, with definitively lasting importance. Now in this conclusion, we shall draw a few modest inferences from Hegel's analysis, also for our present age.

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[32] Idem.
[33] See the authors mentioned in footnote 2: especially Mensching and Latte.
[34] See footnote 21 and the corresponding text, above § 3, Introduction.

As we have seen, the religion of the Romans is all about everyday human affairs: personal and political success, well-being, prosperity etc. Gods are worshipped (and sometimes even invented) for very concrete, subjective purposes. Moreover, these purposes are of a personal, maybe even selfish nature. Not only is private egoism served, but public, collective egoism as well. No wonder the Roman emperor could in due course attain god-like characteristics. The ensuing tendency to superstition and finally fear and anguish gives much food for thought.

Hegel shows himself here as a master in the social psychology of religion. He shows what happens in the mind of the believer when the idea of *homo mensura* (man is the measure of all things, attributed to Protagoras) is in fact elevated to a universal, divine standard. This happens when personal aims and wishes become divinised as objects of worship. As we have read in the *Ms.*, the result is "a crumbling away into momentary enjoyment and pleasure, a human animal kingdom from which all higher elements have been abstracted."[35] In a way, Hegel can be read here as a critic of modern Western culture, in which—due to mass secularization— 'all higher elements have been abstracted' in large areas of the population. Categories that can be attained already in this world are nowadays generally regarded as sacrosanct, like individual happiness, well-being, welfare, security, etcetera.[36] And when these are somehow threatened or jeopardized, either because of immigration, globalization or due to economic crisis, it can come as no surprise that fear becomes an important factor in people's minds and souls. With Hegel in mind, when he speaks on the Roman religion, we can only hope that this monstrous unhappiness and anguish will in the end prove to be the birthpangs of the religion of truth. What religion that is, remains to be seen.

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[35] Hegel, op. cit. p. 229.

[36] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Cambridge Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: 2007, passim.

HEGEL ON CATHOLIC RELIGION

Peter Jonkers

1. Introduction

Among the vast number of books and articles about Hegel's philosophy of religion the overall majority of them focuses on his interpretation of Christianity in general, while relatively few discuss his view of Protestantism and even less his ideas about Catholic religion. Given the importance Hegel attributes to Christianity in comparison to all other religions, and his relative lack of interest for the confessional differences within Christianity, this is no wonder. In Hegel's view Christianity is 'the consummate religion', that is the religion in which the abstract concept of religion has fully developed all its implications, not only as such, but also for human consciousness.[1] Since Hegel determines the essence of religion as the self-consciousness of the absolute spirit, it is only in Christianity, especially in its spiritual nature, that this spirit has become fully conscious of itself. Because of this, Christianity is also the revelatory religion: after having passed through its successive shapes, which form the history of religions, the absolute idea has revealed its essence in the spiritual nature of the Christian God, thus reaching a shape that is perfectly identical with its essence. 'Relevatoriness' and self-communication are essentially what God is, viz. spirit: the spirit moves away from immediacy toward the knowledge of what spirit is in and for itself, toward a self-consciousness that is both divine and human. The Christian doctrine of God's incarnation exemplifies the double movement of the spirit: the divine becoming human (the substance empties itself of itself and becomes self-consciousness), and the human becomes divine (the self-consciousness empties itself of itself and makes itself into a universal self). The essence of this doctrine is formulated in the creed, in particular in the articles on the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. Finally, Christianity is a religion of truth and freedom, since truth, being identical with the spirit, is its content, and since it is the

[1] See the contribution of Lu De Vos to this volume. Furthermore, I want to thank him for some valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

religion in which *all* human beings are recognised to be free, not just *one* (as in the ancient Oriental monarchies) or *some* (as in Greek and Roman societies).[2]

Because of its consummate, revelatory, true, and free character Christian religion is, in Hegel's view, clearly superior to all other historical religions. While many of them continue to be practised throughout the world, the spirit seems to have left them behind, implying that they only exist in a fossilized form. Only Christianity lives, because it is the only religion in which the absolute spirit has become fully manifest, and is conscious of its own revelatory essence. However, (Christian) religion is not the final shape of the absolute idea. Its representational form (including all kinds of sensuous elements, such as stories, tradition, rituals, images etc.) is ill-adapted to its content, the absolute idea. Therefore, it is philosophy's task to give a conceptual justification and criticism of the representational character of (Christian) religion. This will lead to a "flight of religion into philosophy", which means that philosophy is to realize the spiritual content of the religious community in its proper, i.e. conceptual form.[3]

Within Christian religion, Hegel distinguishes between Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist (or, as he calls it, reformed) confessions. In his times, these three were the dominant religions in Western Europe, and also the ones that were privileged in the German federation.[4] As said above, he does not seem to be particularly interested in doctrinal aspects of these inner-Christian distinctions,[5] as he considered them of minor importance in comparison to the difference between Christianity as such and the other historical religions. He was profoundly influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment, in particular by Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, whose ideas about the inherent unity of all religions and about religious tolerance made a strong impression on him ever since his youth. Nevertheless, Hegel has all his life paid considerable attention to Catholic religion in his writings and lectures, starting as early as his *Diary* (1775) till his last lectures on *Philosophy of History* (1830/31) and *Philosophy of Religion* (1831). His main points of interest relate to Catholicism's sensuous and

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[2] For an overview of the essential characteristics of Christianity: P. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology. A Reading of the* Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005, pp. 85 ff, and W. Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Schule*, Stuttgart / Weimar: Metzler Verlag 2003, pp. 467 ff.

[3] W. Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, pp. 474 ff.

[4] W. Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, p. 396.

[5] Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, pp. 193; 260.

authoritarian character, its place in the history of the world spirit, and its attitude towards the modern state.

Generally speaking, Hegel considered himself as an orthodox Lutheran professor of philosophy, although he only rarely made a stand for this in public. This explains to some extent his unfavourable personal attitude against Catholicism, to which he gave vent especially in his letters and personal contacts. As his friend, the Frenchman Cousin, remembered in 1866: "As soon as it was question of Catholicism mr. Hegel forgot our common principles [about the indispensability of religion and the possibility of a conciliation between religion and philosophy, PJ] and abandoned himself to flights rather unworthy of a philosopher," overtly showing his contempt for some typically Catholic rituals and practises, which he considered as superstitious.[6]

In sum, against the background of Hegel's appreciation of Christianity as such, regardless of its internal confessional differences, it is striking that he expresses himself from time to time in a clearly depreciative way about Catholicism. As I will show below more in detail his position with regard to Roman Catholicism was fuelled by a mix of personal and political elements. Therefore, I shall start with analyzing two important biographical and political facts that influenced Hegel's view of this matter. As will become apparent below, they are important to understand Hegel's philosophy of religion.

2. Personal and Political Elements

The duchy of Württemberg, in which both Stuttgart, where Hegel was born, and Tübingen, where he studied theology, lie, was a Protestant enclave in the dominantly Catholic south of Germany. Hegel grew up in a family that was well aware of its strong Protestant roots, with a keen awareness of the existence of religious differences and with the conviction of their momentous consequences: according to a story, which was told in his family, his ancestors had emigrated from Catholic Austria in the 16th Century, where the Protestants had been required to convert to Catholicism, and gone to Protestant Württemberg.[7]

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[6] G. Nicolin (ed.), *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1970, p. 528 [Hegel, *The Letters. Translated by C. Butler and Chr. Seiler; with commentary by C. Butler*, Bloomington (Ind.): Indiana University Press 1984, p. 664].

[7] T. Pinkard, *Hegel. A Biography*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000, pp. 2 f; L. S. Stepelvich, 'Hegel and Roman Catholicism', in: *Journal of the American Academy of*

In the course of his life, several incidents, personal as well as political, reinforced Hegel's negative predisposition towards Catholicism. He vented his feelings about these incidents in his private correspondence, but it is difficult to determine the context of these utterances adequately. Therefore I will limit myself here to discussing one incident, which happened at the end of his life. Because of its official character and its possible consequences for his career this incident probably caused the most serious deterioration in Hegel's attitude towards Catholicism, and is probably one of the causes of the sudden change in his philosophical position with regard to Catholic religion. In the winter semester of 1825/26 a chaplain of the St. Hedwig's cathedral in Berlin had complained to minister Altenstein that Hegel had publicly slandered Catholic religion.[8] In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he had repeated a longstanding Protestant legend about the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. According to this legend, Catholics were required to worship a mouse, as well as its excrements, if it were to eat the consecrated host, since the transubstantiated body of Christ would be in the mouse's stomach.[9] Altenstein deftly passed the problem over to Schulze, who asked Hegel to respond in writing to the complaint. In a confidential letter of April 3, 1826 he gave a quite defiant answer in six points. First, "as professor of philosophy at a Royal Prussian University in Berlin, and as a Lutheran Christian, it is only to be expected that [he] should express [him]self in such terms on the teachings and spirit of Catholicism." Secondly, he has "not sought the opportunity to speak out on the Catholic Church," but has "had to speak of it" in his lectures on the history of philosophy, especially in the part about scholastic philosophy. Thirdly, he did "not leave the matter [of Catholicism] at the level of generalities of either a mild or timid nature, or of a purely condemnatory, deprecatory nature." He has, "on the contrary, had to interpret the Catholic doctrine at its very centre—i.e. the Host, to speak of it, and to speak of it with scientific determinateness." He has "therefore explained and expressed Luther's teachings as true, and as recognised by philosophy as true." Moreover, he is certainly not the only Lutheran Christian,

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Religion, 60, 4 (1992), p. 674. See also: J. Hoffmeister (ed.), *Briefe von und an Hegel IV/1*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag pp. 1952 ff, 8 [Henceforth: Hegel, *Briefe*].

[8] See Pinkard, *Hegel*, p. 529, and Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, p. 54.

[9] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Bd. 9: Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1986, p. 27 [Henceforth: Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 9] [Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy. Edited and translated by Robert F. Brown*, Berkeley (Calif.): University of California Press 2000, p. 47].

who "declare[s] the Catholic doctrine on the Host to be mere papistic idolatry and superstition." Fourthly, his remarks were made during his lectures, so that he "could invoke the right of oral delivery, the meaning of which, at least with regard to casual remarks, is often based on nuances even in the tone of voice, and therefore can be altered if not completely turned around through slight inconspicuous deviations, eliminations, or additions." Fifthly, he considers it beneath his dignity to defend himself against those, who, because of the absurd and malicious conclusions they draw from his lectures, took offence at what he said. He declares a portion of the charges against him to be "errors and misunderstandings born of feeblemindedness;" another portion as "falsehoods, and yet another portion to be [...] cases of malicious disparagement." Hegel's conclusion (his last point) is that, if the Catholics did complain about his lectures,

> they would have to blame only themselves for attending philosophical lectures at a Protestant university, under a professor, who prides himself on having been baptised and raised a Lutheran, which he still is and shall remain. Or else they would have to blame their superiors for failing to warn them or—as has happened elsewhere to Catholic theology students—for failing to prohibit their attendance."[10]

As a result of this letter, the charges against Hegel were rejected by the Prussian authorities, which can be seen as a confirmation of the prevailing state of liberty in Prussia. Nevertheless he took this incident very seriously, as is shown by a remarkable change in attitude towards Catholicism both in his publications and lectures after 1827. In comparison to his *Philosophy of Right* (1821) and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1822/23) his criticism of the Catholic Church, in particular of its interference in political matters, is much more stinging, as I shall show below in detail. A remark in a letter to his wife during a trip to the low countries, a year after this incident, is also quite revealing in this respect: "We have looked over their universities [of Liège, Louvain and Ghent] as prospective resting place in case the clerics in Berlin make *Kupfergraben* [the name of the street in which Hegel lived, P.J.] completely unbearable for me. The Curia in Rome would in any event be a more honourable adversary than the inanities of the inane clerical stew in Berlin."[11]

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[10] Hegel, *Werke*. Herausgegeben von E. Moldenhauer und K. M. Michel. Band 11, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971, pp. 68 ff. [Henceforth: Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe*] [Hegel, *The Letters*, pp. 531 f.]

[11] Hegel, *Briefe III*, p. 202 [Hegel, *The Letters*, p. 663]; see also: Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, p. 54.

3. Hegel's Philosophical Attitude Towards Catholicism

Turning now our attention towards a philosophical perspective, it is clear for Hegel that, within Christian religion, Catholicism is but an inadequate actualisation of the concept of religion, especially in comparison to Protestantism. He gives a number of reasons for this thesis. The external, sensuous element has always prevailed in Catholicism, whereas Protestantism is a more 'spiritualised' form of Christianity, and is therefore better capable to represent God, whose nature is spiritual. In relation to this, Protestantism's idea of God's reconciliation with the world is realised n a purely spiritual way, that is through superseding sensuous nature, whereas Catholicism remains stuck in the sensuous world. Finally, the authoritarian character of Roman Catholic religion, specifically expressing itself in the superiority of the clergy over the laity, and its refusal to accept the principle of secular rule, is at odds with the freedom of all people as the principle of the modern state.

Preliminarily, it is important to notice what Hegel has called 'the Protestant principle', which summarizes his attitude towards Protestant religion.[12] With this notion he does not refer to classical Protestant figures and doctrines, since they were—with the exception of Luther and his abolition of Catholic institutions and practices like monasticism, celibacy, and fasts, as well as the superiority of the Lord's Supper with regard to the Eucharist—hardly of importance to him; neither does he consider this principle to be fully realised in the actually existing forms of Protestantism of his times. Rather, the Protestant principle serves for him as a constructive, interpretative concept, with the help of which he can clarify the essential reasonableness and spirituality of Protestant religion, which is closely connected to the reasonableness of (modern) history and the spiritual nature of the absolute.[13] He opposes this Protestant principle to Catholic religion, thereby implying that the latter is unable to realize the inherent reasonableness and spirituality of Christianity as adequately as Protestantism. So, although Catholicism as well as Protestantism are manifestations of the Christian principle of God as the self-conscious, free,

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[12] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 519 [G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*. Preface by Ch. Hegel and translated by J. Sibree; a new introduction by C. J. Friedrich, New York: Dover Books 1956, p. 438].

[13] Cfr. J. Dierken, 'Hegels 'protestantisches Prinzip'. Religionsphilosophische Implikationen einer geschichtsphilosophischen Denkfigur', in: E. Weisser-Lohmann und D. Köhler (Hrsg.), *Hegels Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (*Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 38*), Bonn, Bouvier 1998, pp. 126–7.

absolute spirit, the latter is far better able to realize the Christian principle adequately than the former.

3.1 *Catholic Religion in Hegel's Early Writings*

As early as in his *Early Writings* Hegel discusses his main points of difference with regard to Catholic religion. In spite of the fragmentary and overall theological character of these writings, it will turn out that some relevant points with regard to this issue, which he elaborates in his later writings, are already present in this group of texts. In the essays, written during his stay in Bern (1793–1796), Hegel deals with the question whether a 'folk religion' can serve as a remedy for the intellectual and social disruption of modern humankind, and with the search for an explanation why Christianity has perverted into a positive religion in the course of its development. Looking from the perspective of the ideal of a free, harmonious and beautiful folk religion, which he thought to be realised in ancient Greece, to the actually existing Christian religion, Hegel is convinced that the latter fails to meet any of the characteristics of this ideal. In the earliest Christian communities of faith, the germs of positivity were already present, and in the ages thereafter, they developed themselves ever further, eventually leading to a completely positive religion.

Within this general interpretative framework, Hegel focuses on the socio-political aspects of Catholicism and of Protestantism; it will turn out that he is equally critical to both of them, since they both make themselves guilty of oppressing people. According to Hegel's interpretation of the history of Christianity, after the times of the Reformation people wanted to restore the purity and sincerity of religion and morals of the first centuries. But this movement ended in a failure. By re-establishing the ecclesiastical police-institutions, the Church reformers thought that they had remained loyal to the simplicity of the early Church, but actually they wanted to control the practice of faith of the people. Thus, "little by little, this arrogant practice of prying into a person's innards, of judging and punishing his conscience, began insinuating itself [in Christian society…]. It became incredibly deep-rooted […] and burgeoned into the most shocking profusion of repressive institutions and ways of deluding mankind: oral confession, excommunication, [and] penances."[14] These

[14] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 131 [Hegel, *Three Essays*, 1793–1795. Edited and Translated with an Introduction and Notes by P. Fuss and J. Dobbins, Notre Dame (Ind.): University of Notre Dame Press 1984, p. 72].

disciplinary practices are not only characteristic for Catholic confession, but have been maintained to a large extent by Protestantism as well, especially the control over the opinions of people. Besides, in the field of politics, both the Catholic and Protestant Church have interfered into the civil state: the fact that the Church, as a spiritual state, unified itself with the civil state, led to a situation, in which the people, whom the Church wanted to exclude from its fellowship, were deprived of their civil rights as well.[15] Hegel considers this as a violation of the very principle of religious freedom, which is essential to the modern state. In his view, religious freedom is a basic human right, and has to be secured by the state: "To be true to one's faith and to be free in the practice of one's religion is a right in which the individual must be protected, not primarily as a Church member, but as a citizen; and a prince in his capacity as such has a duty to secure this right to his subjects."[16] Again, it has to be noted that Hegel is convinced that not only one, but *all* (Christian) Churches have a problem in acknowledging the capacity of individuals to decide about religious matters on the basis of their own reason: "The fundamental error at the bottom of a Church's entire system is that it ignores the rights pertaining to every faculty of the human mind, in particular to the chief of them, reason."[17] The same holds true with regard to the relation between clergy and laity: in the Catholic Church, the rights of the laity to oppose to the laws of faith have always been equal to null, as it had lost its right even to be represented in discussions about faith. In comparison, the fundamental principle of the Protestant Church is that its contract rests on the unanimity of all its members. Besides, they can only join this confession voluntarily: the faith of every individual Protestant must be his faith because it is his own, not because it is the Church's. However, the teachers who founded this Church have not always been loyal to this principle, and have "tried to regard their authority as more extensive, and to decide among themselves what the Church's faith is."[18] All this shows that, as far the history and the current socio-political situation of Christianity as such are concerned, the first part of Hegel's *Early Writings*, written during his

[15] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 315 [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, Translated by T. M. Knox. With an Introduction, and Fragments Translated by R. Kroner, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press 1948, p. 105].

[16] Hegel *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 335 [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, p. 127]. Cf. Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, pp. 73 f.

[17] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 349 [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, p. 143].

[18] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 330 [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, p. 122].

stay in Bern, are as critical of Catholic as of Protestant confession. Because of their positive character, neither of them is loyal to the basic principles of the modern state.[19]

The fact that Hegel, in this phase of his intellectual development, was primarily interested in the socio-political aspects of Protestantism and Catholicism is also confirmed by a fragment of *The German Constitution*, written some years later in Jena (1801). In this text, Hegel shows himself for the first time to be more critical of the Catholic than of the Protestant Church. He gives a concrete example of the problematic way in which especially Catholic princes have assumed the responsibility to safeguard the religious rights of the Protestant Church. Although the denial of conferring civil rights to Protestant or Catholic minorities has occurred both in Catholic and Protestant countries, the Catholic Church has always been "more fanatic" in this. This is so, because the grounds on which this happened seem to be different:

> The Catholics were in the position of the oppressors, the Protestant in the one of the people being oppressed; the Catholics had denied the Protestants the right to express their religion freely, as if they were criminals. [...] The ground for the Protestant intolerance could only be either the right to recompensate the hatred and the intolerance of the Catholics—which would have been an unchristian motive—or a distrust in the strength and truth of their own faith, as well as the fear that their own faithful could be easily seduced by the splendour of Catholic liturgy and the zeal of its adherents.[20]

The last part of this quotation shows Hegel's fear that Protestant faithful, whose basic attitude is that of an internal disposition, might be tempted by a kind of religious sensuousness, exemplified by the splendour of the Catholic liturgy, whereas it was clear to him that this kind of un-spiritual religiosity basically had no future.

By comparison, in his writings dating from his Frankfurt period (1797–1800), and especially in the group of essays, collected under the title *The Spirit of Christianity and Its Fate* Hegel pays far less attention to the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism, and does not focus at all

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[19] This implies that the opinion of L. S. Stepelvich, according to whom Hegel's Theological Writings might just as well have been entitled Anti-Catholic Writings, is simply wrong. See L. S. Stepelvich, Hegel and Roman Catholicism, pp. 683 f. For a more adequate interpretation of Hegel's position, cf. E. Weisser-Lohmann, 'Reformation und Friedrich II in den geschichtsphilosophischen Vorlesungen Hegels' in E. Weisser-Lohmann und D. Köhler (Hrsg.), *Hegels Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (*Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 38*), Bonn: Bouvier 1998, p. 102.

[20] Hegel *Gesammelte Werke* 5, pp. 96 f.

on their socio-political consequences. Although he writes in one of these essays extensively about the Lord's Supper,[21] a theme that serves in his later works as an important aspect of his critique of Catholic religion, he does not make any mention of the diverging interpretations that Catholics and Protestants give of this crucial aspect of their tradition. Instead, Hegel focuses on the unifying force of the Lord's Supper as a supper of love, a subjective experience which gets an objective dimension through the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine.

At the end of *The Spirit of Christianity* Hegel analyses for the first time one of the doctrinal differences between Protestantism and Catholicism, thereby focusing on the question of how all the existing tendencies of separation and reconciliation, opposition and unity, can be thought as resulting from and being united in the divine, all-encompassing unity of life. This concept of life has to be understood as a fundamental speculative category in Hegel's writings of the Frankfurt period. With the help of these oppositional concepts and their unification in the idea of divine life he not only interprets the life and teachings of Jesus as an attempt to lovingly reconcile God's separation from the world, which he sees as the tragic fate of the Jewish people, but also criticises the Christian community for its incapacity to remain loyal to the reconciling spirit of its founder. "In all the forms of the Christian religion [...] there lies this fundamental characteristic of opposition in the divine which is supposed to be present in consciousness only, never in life."[22] However, as Hegel writes at the end of one of the last essays, there is an important difference in this respect between Catholicism and Protestantism. In the Catholic Church, the opposition between God and the world always remains somewhat implicit and is never accepted in its harshest consequences: "All actions and expressions of life [...] purchase their righteousness with the sense of the servitude and the nullity of their opposition." Hegel is referring here to the subservient position of the laity with regard to the clergy, and to the practice of indulgences, both being attempts to mediate through external and sensuous means the radical nature of the separation between God and the world. By contrast, Protestants accept this separation unambiguously and experience it internally, in the sense that "the opposition of

[21] H. Nohl (ed.), *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, Frankfurt am Main: Minerva 1966 [reprint], pp. 297 ff. [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, pp. 248 ff].

[22] Nohl, *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, p. 341 [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, p. 301].

God [to the fate of the world] is felt in more or less pious thoughts,"[23] or is even further radicalised through the faith in a God who 'hates' the world, as is the case in some Protestant sects. With this, Hegel foreshadows his idea, elaborated in his later writings, that Catholicism hallows the sensuous world, because Catholics see the world as a legitimate way of reconciling themselves with God, whereas in Protestantism the sensuous world is completely annihilated, so that the reconciliation between God and the world takes place on a purely spiritual level. Consequently, Catholic religion is unable to 'spiritualize' human life and its joys, to see these joys as resulting from the autonomous, spiritual efforts of humankind, as is the case in Protestantism, but experiences them as gifts and favours from God. In this way the external, sensuous, un-spiritual character of man's reconciliation with God is perpetuated.

3.2 *Catholic Religion in Hegel's Later Works and Lectures*

The overview of the *Early Writings* has shown that Hegel's view on Catholic religion centres around three main themes: its inadequacy to reconcile God and the world in a spiritual way, its clinging to all kinds of sensuous elements, and its incapacity to accept the idea of freedom, both on a personal level and as the principle of the modern state. In his later works he often goes back to what he sees as these basic characteristics of Catholicism, but interprets them from a philosophical perspective. In particular, he interprets the above mentioned characteristics of Catholicism within the framework of a dialectical philosophy of the Spirit. This implies that the (absolute) Spirit is activity, becoming, self-movement, and—as its highest form—knowing self-relation, the identity between the knowing subject and the known object. When applied to Hegel's philosophy of Spirit, the fact that the Spirit is conscious self-movement means that in this process it becomes aware of its opposition against all otherness, which is e.g. exemplified by God's separation from the sensuous world. This negative moment of the dialectical movement of the Spirit has to be accepted in its full harshness: "The life of God and divine cognition [...] sinks into mere edification, and even insipidity, if it lacks the seriousness, the suffering, the patience, and the labour of the negative."[24] According

[23] Nohl, *Hegels Theologische Jugendschriften*, pp. 341 f. [Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, p. 301].

[24] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 9, 18 [Hegel, *Phenomenoplogy of Spirit*, Translated by A. V. Miller. With an Analysis of the Text and Foreword by J. N. Findlay, Oxford: Clarendon 1977, 10].

to Hegel's interpretation of Christianity the apex of this negativity is the death of Christ, which Hegel consistently calls death of God in order to stress its harshness. However this opposition and negativity, the death of God, should not be seen as final, as the annihilation of the Spirit as such. The harsh experience of God's death is only a moment of the life of the Spirit and has to be superseded as a moment of the absolute Spirit. Through the life, death and resurrection of his Son, God reconciles himself with the world, although this reconciliation is not sensuous, but spiritual. As we will see below more in detail Hegel relies on this fundamental speculative insight in the nature of the absolute idea and of the essence of the Christian God as self-conscious Spirit for his interpretation and evaluation of the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism.

a. *Catholicism's Hallowing of the World*

Hegel's idea of the cycle of separation and reconciliation not only determines his understanding of Christianity as such, but is also of crucial importance to mark his idea of the difference between Catholic and Protestant religion. As we shall see, he considers the Catholic interpretation of the idea of reconciliation as inadequate, since it preserves a hallowing of the (sensuous) world. This means that Catholicism is unable to completely negate the sensuous world and replace it by a spiritual idea of it, which forms a differentiated unity with God's spiritual nature. One could even say that its incapacity to supersede the hallowing ('Heiligung') of the world underlies Hegel's criticism of all other aspects of Catholicism, such as the sensuous, external character of its sacraments, and its incapacity to separate itself as a specific confession from the state. Therefore, I shall start with analysing Hegel's view of this essential characteristic of Catholicism and point at its implications for other aspects of this confession in the next subsections.

In his *Lectures on Natural Law* of 1802/03,[25] and also in *Faith and Knowledge* (dating from spring 1802),[26] Hegel elaborates his rudimentary ideas from the *Spirit of Christianity* about separation and reconciliation.

[25] See the editorial notice in Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 5*, pp. 699 ff. to get a clear view on the complex history and status of this manuscript. For an elaborate analysis of these lectures, cf. W. Jaeschke, *Die Vernunft in der Religion. Studien zur Grundlegung der Religionsphilosophie Hegels* (*Spekulation und Erfahrung 4*), Stuttgart, Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1986, pp. 170 ff.

[26] For a detailed analysis of Hegel's remarks about this issue cf. P. Jonkers, "True Faith in 'Faith and Knowledge'", in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 2003, pp. 183–189.

Christianity as such is founded on two basic experiences: the experience of "the de-divinisation of nature, in other words the scorn of the world," and the experience "that in this infinite separation a man [Christ] incorporated nevertheless the trust in the unification with the absolute. In this man the world was reconciled with the spirit again."[27] Thus, one singular person, Christ, expresses the whole empirical history of humankind, starting from an initial, undeveloped harmony (exemplified in the 'natural religion' or 'beautiful mythology' of ancient Greece), through the experience of separation (exemplified by the Romans, dispelling with their campaigns of conquest the local gods of the conquered peoples), and leading to the experience of a new reconciliation in Christianity. In its turn, Christian religion is the symbolic expression of the pivotal moments of the life of Christ, viz. his incarnation, suffering and death, and resurrection. It is of vital importance to Hegel that this ultimate reconciliation through Christ is only possible on the basis of the principle of an infinite grief about the absolute discord between God and (sensuous) nature: "Without this grief, reconciliation has neither meaning nor truth."[28] Christianity represents these contradictory feelings of infinite grief and reconciliation in a cult, in which the idea of the death of God on earth and his resurrection from the grave play a constitutive role.

Hegel interprets the history of the Christian community of faith as expressing the constitutive moments of the life of its founder, Christ. In this context, he marks a clear difference between Catholic and Protestant religion as to the degree in which they are prepared to accept the infinite grief about the loss of the original, immediate reconciliation between God and the world, and consequently also as to their respective views of reconciliation: "In Catholicism this religion has become a *beautiful* religion. *Protestantism* [...] has turned the infinite grief, the liveliness, trust and the peace of reconciliation into an eternal *longing*."[29] In order to save its trust in the unity of the world with God, Catholicism has made the radical desecration of the world undone, and hallows the world once again religiously. It hasn't been able to accept the moment of the separation between God and the world in its most radical negative consequence, i.e. the complete desecration of the world. The key-idea that clearly distinguishes both Christian confessions from each other is that without

[27] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, p. 462.
[28] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 5*, p. 462.
[29] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, 464.

an infinite grief about the separation of God and the world, a grief that Catholic religion is missing, reconciliation has neither meaning nor truth. From the perspective of the history of Christianity, the Catholic idea of reconciliation is stuck in the Middle Ages, and ignores the reality of the separation between God and the world, expressing itself especially in the Reformation and the modern separation of faith and knowledge. Therefore, Hegel considers Catholicism to manifest the atavism of a past shape of the world.[30] Consequently, it gives rise to a renewed cycle, undertaken by Protestantism, of separation, infinite grief about it, and reconciliation, which is more in accordance with the essence of Christianity. With this, Hegel foreshadows his criticism in his later writings and lectures of those of aspects Catholicism, which manifest a clinging to sensuous elements, such as the Catholic doctrine of the transubstantiation of Christ in the Eucharist, its tendency to multiply the number of mediators between God and the world infinitely, as well as its incapacity to separate its specific confession from the state. In sum, as he phrases it in his course on *Philosophical Encyclopaedia* in Nuremberg, in Catholicism "the reconciliation with God is made to some extent external; and, in general, among Catholics a more un-spiritual religious actuality prevails."[31]

In the famous, programmatic passage from the conclusion of *Faith and Knowledge*, Hegel again gives an indication of the basic difference between Catholic and Protestant religion, as well as of their philosophical significance:

> The infinite grief [...] existed as the feeling that 'God Himself is dead,' upon which the religion of modernity rests; the same feeling that Pascal expressed in so to speak empirical form: 'la nature est telle qu'elle *marque* partout un Dieu *perdu* et dans l'homme et hors de l'homme [Nature is such that it *signifies* everywhere a *lost* God both within and outside man]. [...] Since the more serene, less well grounded, and more individual style of [...] the natural religions must vanish, the highest totality can and must achieve its resurrection solely from this harsh consciousness of loss, encompassing everything, and ascending in all its earnestness and out of its deepest ground to the most serene freedom of its shape.[32]

First of all, in this passage Hegel repeats his basic idea that Protestantism, being the religion of modernity, is founded on subjectivity, which is

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[30] Jaeschke, *Die Vernunft in der Religion*, p. 174.

[31] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 4, p. 68.

[32] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 4*, pp. 413 f. [G. W. F. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge. Translated by W. Cerf and H.S. Harris*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977, pp. 190–1].

conscious of its radical loss of nature, and feels an infinite grief about this loss. The consciousness that God cannot be found in nature has reached its apex in the experience of Good Friday,[33] which Hegel interprets not so much as the death of Christ, but as the death of God himself. From a philosophical perspective, this experience can be considered as a symbolic crucifixion of nature.[34] Hegel quotes Pascal in order to underscore his conviction that God cannot be found neither within man as a natural being, nor in nature surrounding him. This means ipso facto that, in the eyes of modern subjectivity, all forms of natural religions, i.e. Greek mythology, must vanish, because it does not take this basic experience of radical negativity seriously. But the same holds true for Catholic religion, which remains attached to the immediate, sensuous presence of God in the world. For Hegel, a true reconciliation between God and the world, the highest totality, can only be achieved through a radical negation of their immediate unity, not by ignoring it. Secondly however, the radical negation of sensuous nature is not to be taken absolutely, but is only a moment in the resurrection of God as an absolute, spiritual totality. In sum, there is a radical conversion from the absence of God in nature to the presence of God as spirit,[35] a conversion that is felt and represented much more adequately by Protestant than by Catholic religion.

Hegel's idea that a true reconciliation is only possible on the basis of a radical disruption of nature exactly corresponds with his view, also formulated in *Faith and Knowledge*, that speculative philosophy can only emerge after reflective philosophy has gone through the complete cycle of its forms, phrasing its oppositions in the most radical way. Otherwise, no absolute speculative, differentiated unity is possible. Hegel's view that a true form of religious reconciliation can only emerge after subjectivity has become painfully aware of the radical disruption between God and nature, as well as that true philosophy can only arise after the oppositions of understanding have reached their apex, can be interpreted as a foreshadowing of the dialectical movement of the absolute idea in Hegel's later writings. However, at the beginning of the Jena period he does not yet dispose of an elaborated concept of the spirit in order to interpret

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[33] In this context, it is important to notice that, in German, Good Friday is called 'Karfreitag'. 'Kar' refers to lamentation, grief, and is related to 'karg', which means sparse, distressed. So, whereas the word 'Good Friday' already refers ahead to the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday, 'Karfreitag' stresses much more the sorrow about his death.

[34] J.-L. Vieillard-Baron, *Hegel. Système et structures théologiques*, Paris: Cerf 2006, p. 47.

[35] Vieillard-Baron, *Hegel. Système et structures théologiques*, p. 52.

these two movements as a manifestation of the spirit's dialectical movement in history.[36]

Characteristic for the Protestant way of dealing with this issue is not only that it has turned the cycle of grief and reconciliation into an eternal longing of the subject for a 'beyond', but also has brought about a reconciliation of the subject with empirical reality. Subjectivity's turning away from the sensuous world and its returning in itself has simultaneously set the world free as something purely profane. Thus, the subject can reconcile itself with empirical reality in a way in which the latter has become mere material for the activity of the subject. "That religious elevation and the hallowing of empirical existence, the *Sabbath of the world*, [which is characteristic for Catholicism, P.J.] has disappeared, and life has become an ordinary, unholy workday."[37] Nevertheless, precisely because of the radical nature of the opposition between an eternally longing subject and a completely de-divinised, ordinary world, the reconciliation, offered by Protestantism, cannot be fulfilled and therefore has to perish as well, as Hegel indicates already in this text from 1802/03,[38] and elaborates at length a few years later in the chapter on the 'beautiful soul' of the *Phenomenology of Spirit.*

b. *Catholicism's Clinging to Sensuousness*

Hegel criticises time and again the sensuous, un-spiritual character of Catholic religion, which he interprets as the inevitable consequence of its hallowing of the world, as we have seen above. In his view, "the principle of the depravity lies in the [Catholic] Church, [...] and consists in its incapacity to have truly, totally excluded the sensuous."[39] Only art can be considered as a legitimate way of giving sensuousness a place in religion, since it 'glorifies' the sensuous, and does not present itself as the ultimate fulfilment of the spirit. But all other sensuous aspects of Catholicism, and there are many of them, clearly show its depravity. This preeminently concerns its doctrine of the sacraments, and within this, the teaching of the Eucharist. In this respect, Catholic religion is inferior to the two other forms of Christianity, viz. the Lutheran and the Reformed

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[36] See Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, pp. 155–6.

[37] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, p. 464.

[38] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, p. 464.

[39] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Band 12: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1996, p. 496 [Henceforth: Hegel. *Vorlesungen* 12] [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 412 f].

(Calvinist) Church. "Into this last midpoint of [Christian] religion differences enter, which endow all the other differences in religion with their significance."[40] Both in the Catholic Eucharist and the Protestant Lord's Supper, the Christian community is conscious of God's presence in the world, of its spiritual unity with God, since in Christ the vision of this unity is given to the faithful. Moreover, this presence is not just a momentaneous event, but an eternal process. With this, Hegel stresses again the spiritual nature of God's unity with the world. In this sense, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the realisation of the Christian idea of the reconciliation with God in a cult.

However, Catholic religion has been unable to remain loyal to the spiritual nature of Christianity, as becomes manifest in its doctrine of the transubstantiation and in the various cults devoted to the host. It has isolated the sensuous moment of Christ, so that the unity with God can only be realised in an external, sensuous way, through a piece of bread, not spiritually: "The host—this external, sensible thing—becomes by consecration the present God, God as a thing in the manner of an empirical 'thing'."[41] Consequently, the transubstantiated hosts are dispensed among the faithful like items at a market or fair (*Messe*); hence the Catholic Eucharist is called a 'mass'. Another aspect of Catholicism's isolation of the sensuous moment of Christ is the veneration of the consecrated host in the monstrance, i.e. even when it is not consumed. The fact that Catholicism thus has turned an external, sensuous thing into something worthy of adoration is the best illustration of its incapacity of truly superseding the sensuous world. For Hegel, the adoration of the host "is the nadir of the *external character* of the [Catholic] Church."[42] His ridiculing remark in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* about Catholics worshiping a mouse, if it were to eat the consecrated host (see above), fits very well into this frame of interpretation. By contrast, in the Lutheran idea of the Lord's Supper, the presence of God is purely spiritual. For the Lutheran Church, the unification with God is not realised by adoring the host, but

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[40] Hegel, *Vorlesungen. Ausgewählte Nachschriften und Manuskripte*, Band 5: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Teil 3: Die vollendete Religion*, Hamburg, Meiner Verlag 1984, p. 288; cf. also p. 261, Textvariante Gr. [Henceforth: Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 5] [Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 3: The Consummate Religion*, Edited by P. Hodgson and translated by R. F. Brown e. a., Berkeley: University of California Press 1985, p. 372; cf. also p. 338].

[41] Hegel, *Vorlesungen 5*, pp. 260 f. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion 3*, p. 338]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen 12*, 481 ff. [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 377].

[42] Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 9, p. 27 [Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, p. 47].

by eating and digesting it, thus annihilating it insofar as it is something sensuous. The unification with God and the consciousness about the unification of the subject with God so becomes something purely spiritual. In sum, in the Lutheran Church "God is utterly a spiritual presence—the consecration takes place in the faith of the subject."[43]

The fact that, in the Catholic Church, the sacred is identified with a sensuous thing, the host, makes that it can be usurped by a group of people, and is turned against the ordinary faithful. This is where Hegel's criticism of the Catholic separation between the clergy and the laity comes in: the former possesses the highest good of humankind, whereas the latter only can receive it from the clergy, which confirms their dependence on them and thus their un-free character.[44] Moreover, the clergy enhances its position of power by its claim to possess also the other sacraments: thus, it has succeeded in making itself indispensable for the laity to receive God's grace, and formulates ever new conditions the laity has to meet in order to be allowed to receive the host or the other sacraments. In particular, it develops a complex theological doctrine, and claims the access to this science of the divine for itself, so that the laity is expected to simply believe and obey this doctrine, without understanding it and freely assenting to it. By doing so, the clergy has appointed itself as an extra mediating body between God and the world, possessing many extra sensuous 'means of grace', which it can at will distribute among the laity, so that the latter becomes incapable to address God directly in its prayers.[45] Moreover, the laity is held unable to mend its ways by itself, and can only reconcile itself with God by fulfilling external, sensuous acts, the so-called 'opera operata', by order of the servants of the Church. Hegel calls these 'opera' un-spiritual acts, which make the spirit blunt, especially because they can even be executed by someone else, so that people can set up a complete trade in them, as is the case with the indulgences.[46]

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[43] Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 5, p. 261 [Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion* 3, p. 339]. See also Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 19*, §563 A. [Henceforth: Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{2}], and Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 20, §552 A. [Henceforth: Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{3}] [G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of mind: being part three of the Encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences* (*1830*). *Translated by W. Wallace; with foreword by J. N. Findlay*, Oxford: Clarendon 1971, pp. 284–5].

[44] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 454 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 378]; Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 9, p. 28 [Hegel, *The History of Philosophy*, pp. 47–8] See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, p. 500 [Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, p. 378], and Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 16, p. 316.

[45] Hegel, *Theorie Werkausgabe* 12, p. 455 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 378], and Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 16, p. 316.

[46] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 456 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 379].

Another factor in the multiplication of sensuous, mediating elements between God and the world concerns the veneration of the relics of saints. Because the faithful have an endless need for sensuously feeling the presence of the sacred, the number of holy persons, holy images and statues, holy places and times, holy occurrences (miracles) etc. multiplies and individualises itself infinitely. This is the most pregnant illustration of the incapacity of Catholic religion to truly supersede the sensuous: all sensuous things are capable of manifesting the presence of the divine. Hegel criticises the veneration of sensuous images as being clearly inferior to the spirit and thinking, but above all he warns that "together with the [veneration of the] image the worship of God in Spirit was lost, and even Christ himself was set aside."[47] In sum, because of the external, sensuous character of its 'means of grace', its stress on the 'opera operata' to the detriment of the internal disposition of the faithful, its veneration of saints etc. Catholicism jeopardises the essence of Christianity: Christ is the only true mediator, so that there is no need at all for another mediator between the Mediator and humankind.[48] The paradoxical conclusion is that the infinite multiplication of external, sensuous mediators between God and the world in the Catholic Church, originally meant to ensure the faithful of their reconciliation with God, of being worthy to receive God's grace, actually hinders a true reconciliation, which presupposes the subject's free assenting to the offer of God's grace.

The ultimate consequence of Catholicism's incapacity to supersede the sensuous world is that it has to regain possession of the most sacred place of the world, the Holy Sepulchre. Hegel discusses the issue of the crusades and its dramatic consequences at length in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. Besides the political significance of the clash between the Orient and the Occident, the experience of the crusades is especially of momentous *religious* importance. By conquering the Holy Land, Christianity had gained possession of the holiest of all relics, the soil on which the Lord had printed his footsteps, the veronica, the Holy Cross, and last but not least the Holy Sepulchre. The possession of these things was meant to be the fulfilment of Catholicism's sensuous character. However, it also turns out to be the dialectical turning point in the history of Christianity: "In the grave is found the real point of retroversion [of the

[47] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 455 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 378]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, pp. 482 f.

[48] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 469 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 390].

sensuous character of Christian religion, P.J.]; it is in the grave all vanity of the sensuous perishes."[49] The experience of the empty grave made Christianity aware that its principle is not to be found in the sensuous world, in the grave, among the dead, but in the living spirit of the faithful. Protestantism has fully accepted the significance of this dramatic, disappointing experience and has consequently desecrated the world completely. Phrased positively, it

> attains the conviction that man must look within himself for the *this*, which is of a divine nature; subjectivity thereby receives absolute authorisation, and claims to determine for itself the relation [of all that exists] to the divine. This then was the absolute result of the crusades, and from them we may date the commencement of self-reliance and spontaneous activity.[50]

Catholicism has been unable to reach this consciousness of the spiritual nature of God, and has kept on holding to the presence of God in all kinds of external, sensuous things.

Hegel's rendering of this crucial moment in the history of Christianity is very significant for several reasons. First, it elaborates his idea, only hinted at above, that Catholicism, after having proven its incapacity of really desecrating the world, has given rise to a renewed cycle of separation, infinite grief and reconciliation: the distressing experience of the vanity of all sensuousness, culminating in the experience of the empty grave, and its consequence, the Reformation, bringing about the turn to a purely spiritual reconciliation with God, are its pivotal moments. While Catholicism has proven to be unable to fulfil this cycle, Protestantism has assumed this task and therefore is the true continuation of the history of Christianity. Hegel's philosophical interpretation of the history of Christianity explains, secondly, why he considers Catholicism as a bygone shape of the world spirit.

> *Henceforth it* [*the Catholic Church, P.J.*] *occupies a position of inferiority to the World-Spirit*; the latter has already transcended it, for it has become capable of recognising the sensuous as sensuous, the external as external; it has learned to occupy itself with the finite in a finite way, and in this very activity to maintain an independent and confident position as a valid and rightful subjectivity.[51]

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[49] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 471 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 392]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, pp. 484 ff.

[50] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 472 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 393]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, p. 486.

[51] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 492 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 413]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, p. 497.

In this passage, Hegel refers to the Catholic 'Church', thereby stressing the most external, sensuous and hierarchical aspects of this religion. In this respect, Protestantism cannot be called a 'Church' in the Catholic sense of the word; it has 'reformed' the Church to a community of faith, based upon the universal principles of freedom and reasonableness, which characterise Protestant religion as well as modern society. In this way, it has liberated Christian religion from the 'ecclesiastical particularity', characteristic for Catholicism, however odd this may sound for Catholic (which literally means 'universal') ears.[52]

c. *Catholicism's 'Slavish Deference to Authority'*

Finally, Hegel's critique of Catholic religion concerns its lack of freedom, both on an individual and a political level. This is the paradoxical result of the Catholic shape of Christianity, which is essentially a religion of freedom. In particular, it is again a consequence of Catholicism's hallowing of the world and the latter's incapacity to realise a true, spiritual reconciliation of the world with God. Precisely this sensuous character makes people dependent on something external, un-spiritual, such as the power of the clergy in the distribution of the means of grace, and the multiple presence of the sacred in the world. Whereas Catholic religion has introduced these mediations in order to facilitate man's free reconciliation with God, their external character actually obstructs any reconciliation: the Catholic Church, pretending to possess all these means of grace, acts as if it also were the owner of the conscience of the individuals,[53] thus making them un-free. It causes among the faithful a "slavish deference to *authority*."[54] A true reconciliation does not need all these external means, imposed upon the people by a Church that claims to be the necessary mediator between the world and the sole real mediator, Christ, but can be reached much more appropriately by the faithful themselves as free spiritual beings. Moreover, the external character of the demands of the Catholic Church causes people to comply with them externally as well, thereby still further jeopardising true, i.e. spiritual reconciliation: "Thus, the relationship of absolute un-freedom has been introduced [by the Catholic Church,

[52] J. Dierken, *Hegels 'protestantisches Prinzip'*, pp. 139 f.

[53] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 19, p. 539; see also Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 456 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 379], Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*[2] §563 A, and *Enzyklopädie*[3] §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 285].

[54] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 493 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 413].

P.J.] into the principle of freedom itself [being the essence of Christianity as such, P.J.]."[55]

In this context, Hegel's critique of the three (monastic) vows of poverty, obedience and chastity has to be mentioned. They are an example of the imposition of positive ecclesiastical commandments, thus showing Catholicism's incapacity to recognise the faithful as free, spiritual human beings. Because of its hallowing of the sensuous world, Catholic religion considers the world as something ethically holy, a content that is immediately given by God, not as the result of man's free, self-conscious, spiritual activity. Because Catholic religion ignores that God's presence in the world is not natural, but spiritual, it is also unable to appreciate that the world's ethical content is spiritual, i.e. immanently unified with self-consciousness. The results of this incapacity are the commandments of holiness, exemplified by the three monastic vows. They illustrate the un-spiritual, un-free character of Catholicism, its dependence on the world as something immediately given by God. In Hegel's view, it is not so much because these commandments are unnatural, but because they undermine the obligations and virtues of ethical life, that the former have to be replaced by the latter. The achievement of Protestantism is to have reversed the 'natural' character of the Catholic idea of the world as holiness, replacing it by conscious, ethical acts, which are an actualisation of the world's spiritual character:

> Instead of the vow of chastity, *marriage* now ranks as the ethical relation [...] Instead of the vow of poverty [...] is the precept of action to acquire goods through one's own intelligence and industry [...]. And instead of the vow of obedience, true religion sanctions obedience to the law and the legal arrangements of the state.[56]

On a political level, the un-free character of Catholic religion comes to the fore still more clearly. As shown above Hegel has, from his *Early Writings* on, always been very critical with regard to the interference of all Christian confessions into the civil state, specifically their violation of the basic principle of religious freedom. However, for Catholicism (and this in contrast to Protestantism) this interference belongs to its very essence, since it is still another consequence of its basic character of the hallowing

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[55] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 457 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 379]. See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, p. 497.

[56] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 286]. See also Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 16*, pp. 319f.

of the world, including its ethical content. Because of this, it is unable to recognise the very principle of the modern state, viz. the independence of the civil state from the spiritual state. In sum, "with Catholic religion no reasonable constitution is possible."[57]

Hegel's growing awareness of the complexities regarding the relation between the main Christian confessions and the state, not only on a theological level, but also in political practice, in addition to a personal experience, to which I referred in the second section of this paper, are probably the cause of a remarkable change in his view on this issue at the end of his life. In his last Berlin years he attaches more importance to the differences between Catholicism and Protestantism than before, specifically with regard to their respective stance towards the state. Apparently, the political neutralisation of the Churches and their loss of political power had progressed far less than he at first had expected, especially as far as the Catholic Church was concerned.[58] Hegel had always, i.e. as soon as in Bern (1796), considered religious freedom as a human right and as a consequence of the independence of the state from the Church, being the principle of the modern state: "[I]t is properly a civil obligation to respect another's right to freedom in his faith. A man cannot bind himself, still less his posterity, to will to believe anything."[59] In the *Philosophy of Right* he repeats this basic idea by saying that "a *man counts as a man in virtue of his manhood alone*, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian etc."[60] Also in §270 A, in which he explicitly deals with the relation between the state and religion, Hegel warns against the tendency to found the state on a specific religious confession, as this would leave the door wide open to all kinds of religious fanaticism. As he had already noticed in *The German Constitution*, ever since

> religion has torn up the state completely, it has at the same time in a wonderful way given rise to the suspicion of some principles, on which a state can be founded; since its separation has torn apart humans in their most inner essence, and nevertheless a relationship should be maintained, the people should unite themselves on the basis of external things, such as making war etc.; this unification is the principle of the modern state.[61]

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[57] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 531 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 449].

[58] For an extensive analysis of this problem: W. Jaeschke, "Es ist *ein* Begriff der Freiheit in Religion und Staat", in *Staat und Religion in Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*. hg. v. A. Arndt, Chr. Iber und G. Kruck, Berlin. Akademie Verlag, 2009, p. 9ff.

[59] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 1, p. 332.

[60] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke 14*, §209 A. [Henceforth: Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*] [T. M. Knox, *Hegel's Philosophy of Right.* Clarendon, Oxford, 1967, p. 134].

[61] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 5, p. 99.

This means that the modern state, i.e. the state after the confessional split-up, is torn apart as long as it remains founded on a specific confession as its unifying middle. In order to solve this, it has to find another, non-confessional common ground, such as the idea of a free society which deserves to be defended against enemies.

However, although Hegel rejects the idea that the state can be founded upon a specific confession, he explicitly recognises that "insofar religion [...] does not run counter to the state in a negative or polemical way, but rather recognises the state and upholds it," it nevertheless has an enormous integrative and obliging potential, which can serve as an absolute justification to the ultimate moral principle of the state.[62] This leads him to the quite liberal conclusion, as he calls it himself, regarding the relation between the state and various specific religious communities, be they Catholic, Protestant, Quakers, Anabaptist etc.:

> The state should even require all its citizens to belong to a Church—*a* Church is all that can be said, because since the content of a man's faith depends on his private ideas, the state cannot interfere with it. A state which is strong because its organisation is mature may be all the more liberal in this matter; it [...] may even tolerate a sect (though, of course, all depends on its numbers) which on religious grounds declines to recognise its direct duties to the state.[63]

Hegel is quite confident that the state is strong enough to tolerate these people (under the condition that there are not too many of them), because it can primarily rely on the strength and the internal reasonableness of its institutions.

But especially after 1827 Hegel becomes more and more impressed by the negative consequences of the politics of restoration in Prussia, such as the conflict about mixed marriages, and the regained self-esteem of Catholics, expressing itself in the accusation that Hegel had publicly slandered Catholic religion (see above), as well as by the July-Revolution (1830) in France.[64] In this context, his assessment of the role of the Catholic Church in pre-revolutionary France is worthwhile mentioning: The government was unable to undertake the only too necessary reforms of the state because of various reasons, one of them being the fact that "it was a Catholic government, implying that the concept of freedom—reason

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[62] Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts* §270 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, 168]. See also Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* from 1822/23 in Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 12, pp. 87 f.

[63] Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts* §270 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, p. 168].

[64] Weisser-Lohmann, *"Reformation" und "Friedrich II"*, pp. 119 f.

embodied in laws—did not pass for the final absolute obligation, since the Holy and the religious conscience are separated from it [i.e. from the concept of freedom, P.J.]."[65] In his view, Catholics have proven to be never fully loyal to the modern state, as they always have their reserves about it, because they do not accept the world of politics to be governed on the basis of freedom and secular reason, but consider it in its immediate unity with the holiness of the world as such, which has to be judged not by the standard of reason, but by religious conscience. Therefore, they get up to a temporary form of religious tolerance at the most, but never are able to accept religious freedom as a basic human right. "In the Catholic Church [...] it is nothing singular for the conscience to be found in opposition to the laws of the state. Assassinations of sovereigns, conspiracies against the state, and the like, have often been supported and carried into execution by priests."[66] This is not because the clergy were immoral, but because it obeys to a higher, sacred morality, which is at odds with the reasonableness of ethical life of the state.

The above-mentioned personal and political experiences brought Hegel in the second and third edition of the *Encyclopaedia* (1827 and 1830), and in his last publication, the *Speech for the Celebration of the Jubilee of the Confessio Augustana* (1830), as well as in his last lectures on *the Philosophy of History* (1830/31) and on *the Philosophy of Religion* (1831) to considerably revise his liberal ideas of the *Philosophy of Right*, as to whether the state should tolerate confessions that do not fully recognise its authority. It is clear that Hegel considered the Catholic Church as evidently belonging to this category. In the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia* he first repeats his basic idea that, since religion contains the highest truth, "for self-consciousness religion is the basis of moral life and the state."[67] However, in comparison to the *Philosophy of Right*, he adds an important distinction, especially regarding the various Christian confessions: "The general distinction [that matters here] is whether the un-freedom or the freedom of the spirit makes up the determination [of religion and the state]. Moreover, it can occur that a religion is un-free as to its form, although its content *in itself* is the absolute spirit," thereby explicitly referring to Catholic

[65] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 529 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, p. 447].
[66] Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 12, p. 504 [Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, pp. 423 f.].
[67] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{2} §563 A., and *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of mind*, p. 284].

religion as an example of un-freedom.[68] In the 1830 edition of this book, he even writes that "it has been the monstrous blunder of our times [to think…] that religion would be without effect on the moral life of the state, i.e. its reasonable law and constitution, which would be based on a ground of their own."[69] And some pages further: "It is no use to organise political laws and arrangements on principles of reason and equity, so long as in religion the principle of un-freedom is not abandoned."[70] While in the *Philosophy of Right* his position was that, in case of a conflict between the spirit of a religion, which for the individuals counts as their most intimate conscience and their highest obligation, and the state, the latter can always rely on the strength and the internal reasonableness of its institutions, he now considers this as an abstract and empty idea: "Opposed to what religion pronounces holy, the laws appear something made by human hands: even though backed by penalties and externally introduced, they could offer no lasting resistance to the contradictions and attacks of the religious spirit."[71]

Apparently, by this time Hegel had come to the conclusion that the state should not accept no matter which confession as its ideological justification, but only a confession which, just like the modern state itself, has the freedom of the spirit as its basic principle. If a confession does not accept this very idea of ethical life, but tries to subordinate the state to its sacred order, this means a threat to the state and therefore should not be tolerated. In Hegel's view, this is clearly the case with the Catholic Church. As he writes in the manuscript of his *Lectures of the Philosophy of History* of 1831, again criticising his earlier position of the *Philosophy of Right*: "It is an insanity of our times if one wants to invent and implement constitutions independently from religion; although Catholic religion shares with Protestant religion the same common ground, it does not allow the internal justice and ethical life of the state, which lies in the intimateness of the Protestant principle."[72] This does not mean that Hegel wants to give a Protestant-confessional foundation to the state, let alone that he would want to establish Protestantism as a state religion,[73]

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[68] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{2} §563 A., see also *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 284].

[69] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 284].

[70] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 287].

[71] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*^{3} §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 287].

[72] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 18, p. 173.

[73] See Weisser-Lohmann, 'Reformation und Friedrich II', pp. 120 f, and Dierken, "Hegels 'protestantisches Prinzip' ", p. 142.

but only stresses his central point that there is always a correspondence between the principle of a confession and the principle of the state, which it allows of. In the case of Catholic religion this principle is un-freedom, as Hegel shows by referring to its external, un-spiritual character, and the power of the clergy over the laity. "Along with this [Catholic] principle of spiritual bondage [...] there can only go in the legislative and constitutional system a legal and moral bondage, and a state of lawlessness and immorality in political life."[74] In sum, it is impossible to have a political revolution, establishing the foundations of the modern state, without a religious reformation, putting an end to the sanctities of the old religion, in particular Catholicism.

4. Conclusion

It is not easy to give a philosophical assessment of Hegel's critique of Catholic religion, since some of its elements are clearly the result of other than philosophical factors. One only has to refer to his unfortunate personal experiences with Catholicism, particularly with the clergy in Berlin. They play an important role in his depreciative attitude against Catholicism. However, no matter how much they have upset Hegel, these experiences belong to the vicissitudes of the lives of people, and do not concern Catholic religion as such.

On a philosophical level, Hegel's critical remarks about Catholic religion result from what he considers to be its most problematic aspect, Catholicism's remaining stuck in the sensuous world. The clearest manifestation of this is the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist. As said above, Hegel considers it as the place *par excellence*, where the ways of both major Christian confessions part. In the Eucharist, Christ is believed to be present in the host, once it is consecrated by the priest, in a bodily, un-spiritual and external fashion. He situates the truth of Christian religion in its spiritual and inward nature, which implies letting the sensuous element to pass away. It cannot be held on to as some sort of relic or holy image, but must be allowed to pass into new forms, whereby it is remembered and re-enacted,[75] as happens in the Lutheran celebration of the Lord's Supper.

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[74] Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*[3] §552 A. [Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 285]. It is important to notice that both the tone and the content of this passage is much sharper in the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopaedia* than in its edition of 1827.

[75] Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, p. 178.

But Hegel's by far most stinging critique concerns the political aspect of Catholic religion. He suspects the Catholic Church of being incapable to really accept the neutral character of the modern state with regard to specific religious confessions. His suspicion was considerably enhanced by the general fear that the forces of restoration and what he considered to be their natural alley, Catholicism, would put an end to the achievements of the French revolution, especially to the principle of religious freedom; the evolution of Hegel's ideas about the relation between religion and politics in the second half of the 1820s illustrates this. It is clear that Hegel's critique of the un-free character of Catholic religion goes well beyond some specific elements of its anti-modern political attitudes; especially at the end of his life he is convinced that Catholicism is fundamentally unwilling to accept the idea of freedom as the ultimate principle of the modern state.

Although Hegel's attitude with regard to Catholicism is by and large a depreciative one, it has to be noted that he appreciates various specific aspects of Catholic religion, especially the way in which medieval theology has emphasized the unity of faith and reason. In his lectures on *Philosophy of Religion* Hegel states that theology essentially concerns "the understanding of the religious content,"[76] and explicitly values 'older Catholic theologians', such as Eckhart, for their speculative approach of God. In this respect Catholic theology compares favourably by Protestantism's tendency of keeping philosophy and theology strictly apart from each other. But Hegel's his positive evaluation of Catholicism in this respect takes only a marginal place in his works (he mentions it only in his lectures on philosophy of religion and the history of philosophy), and does not seem to have any implications for his general idea about Catholic religion, just like his critique of the separation of faith and reason in the Protestant Church does not affect his appreciation of the 'Protestant principle'. That is why I did not include this aspect of Hegel's thought in my analysis of his view on Catholic religion.

However, Hegel's stress on the necessity for Christian religion to radically annihilate all sensuousness, and his critique of Catholicism for being unable to fulfil this requirement illustrates a bias in his interpretation of Catholic doctrine. The most explicit and well-known phrasing of this annihilation of all sensuousness is the passage of the death of God, but the historical experience of the empty grave as the result of the crusades is

[76] Hegel, *Vorlesungen* 3, p. 247; see also Hegel, *Theorie-Werkausgabe* 20, pp. 54 f.

another example of it. In Hegel's view, these moments of absolute negativity have to be experienced in their utmost harshness in order to be able to serve as a turning-point in the manifestation of the true, spiritual nature of Christianity. To quote again a famous passage from *Faith and Knowledge*: "The highest totality can and must achieve its resurrection solely from this harsh consciousness of loss, encompassing everything."[77] In fact, Hegel's phrase of the death of God stems from a famous Lutheran choral from 1641 by Johann Rist, *O Darkest Woe*. The beginning of the second strophe runs as follows: "O sorrow dread! God himself is dead, on the cross He has died."[78] Although Hegel interprets this phrase philosophically, his use of it implies that he takes a typical Lutheran view of reconciliation as his point of departure, and clearly interprets Catholic religion from this perspective, thereby showing that he is unable to interpret Catholic religion in its own right.

[77] Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke* 4, pp. 413 f. [Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, pp. 190–1].
[78] J. Rist, *O Traurigkeit:* 'O große Not! Gott selbst ist tot, Am Kreuz ist er gestorben'.

A RELIGION AFTER CHRISTIANITY? HEGEL'S INTERPRETATION OF ISLAM BETWEEN JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Gerrit Steunebrink

1. Introduction

The interpretation of Islam in Hegel's philosophy of religion poses us for a problem. For there is no chapter about Islam is his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Islam is mentioned there with a few words in the margin of Judaism and Christianity. How can you dedicate a chapter in this book to Hegel's philosophical interpretation of the religion of Islam? At the other hand: Islam is very present in special chapters in Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of History, on the History of Philosophy and on the Philosophy of Art. Moreover, he quotes very enthusiastically Islamic mysticism in the last chapter of the Encyclopaedia!

However, why is it then so absent in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*? The main reason is that Islam does not fit into the evolutionary scheme that Hegel applies on the history of religions. For in this scheme Christianity is the absolute and therefore final religion that completes and ends the history of religions. After the final absolute religion, a new religion cannot again come into being. Islam came into existence after Christianity and therefore contradicts the system. Muslims themselves usually do not forget to add that after Islam a new world religion did not make its entrance anymore. So now, Islam can claim to be the final and absolute religion!

So Hegel has the same problem with Islam that all Christians have with Islam: what is the sense of a new religion after Christianity? Fortunately, Hegel does not give the traditional answer that Islam is just a bad copy of Judaism and Christianity and that the prophet Mohammed is an imposter. However, why did Hegel dedicate ample chapters to Islam in his other works, and only there?

Hegel presents Islam in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* not as a new, specific religion, but, just like Judaism, as a 'religion of the Sublime', that means a religion of the overwhelming existence of the infinite God that threatens the (semi)autonomy and freedom of the finite world. Therefore, Hegel thinks that Islam is not a new religion, but just a kind of

Judaism and specifically 'denationalized' Judaism. And that is why he did not dedicate a specific chapter in the lectures on Philosophy of Religion to Islam. But as a universal, 'denationalized' type of Judaism, Islam came into existence after Christianity and therefore it is, according to Hegel, a part of the history of the Christian world. Therefore, it should be described and interpreted in the context of the history of the Christian world. In fact, Hegel turns the effects Islam historically had on Western culture into the reason of its existence, into the goal of history. That is the reason why Hegel speaks about Islam in function of the history of Europe, of European philosophy and of European literature. Therefore, Islam is extensively present in the Lectures on the Philosophy of History, on the History of Philosophy and on the Philosophy of Fine Art (Aesthetics). It functions there as a rival for Christianity. For by its universality Islam is at the same level of Christianity. Moreover, on that level it is a challenge for Christianity to realize its true spirit.[1] Thus, it plays a role in the formation of the modern European states at the end of the Middle Ages. It mediated the Greek philosophical text to the West in that time and the discovery of its poetry inspired modern literature in the eighteenth century. So Hegel has not just a shared long-standing European antipathy to Islam, as sometimes is said.[2] The attitude towards Islam is a mix of criticism and admiration. One feels in his admiration, especially in his Lectures on the Philosophy of History and in his Aesthetics, the influence of the enthusiastic discovery of the oriental world by the Romantics.

In his Aesthetics Hegel's admiration for Islam by far excels his criticism. An important shift in his approach to Islam newly manifests itself there too. For Hegel now separates Islam from Judaism and unites Islamic mystical poetry with its Indian and Christian counterparts. Here and in the Encyclopaedia Hegel quotes those mystical texts in the context of a critical elaboration on the concept of pantheism. He uses them positively in order to establish a kind of universal consensus that the (differential) identity relation between God and the world is what all religions and philosophy together want to express. In this sense, mysticism is the international essence or the Internationale of the world religions. This idea softens to

[1] See Peter C. Hodgson, *Hegel & Christian Theology. A Reading of the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005, pp. 199, 206.

[2] Hodgson, *Hegel & Christian Theology*, p. 206. Hodgson is right in saying that Islam did not fit in Hegel's scheme, but not in saying that Hegel had a long-standing antipathy to Islam.

a certain extent Hegel's teleological scheme. But of course, Christianity realizes most excellently this identity as an identity in difference.

In the next paragraphs, we will first present the Kantian background of the idea of the Sublime and important concepts related to it, like fanaticism and enthusiasm, which sometimes cause misunderstanding. Then we will go through the several Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, the Philosophy of History, the History of Philosophy and on Fine Art. At the end of each section and in the conclusion we will give a critical evaluation of Hegel's thought related to the actuality of his interpretation.

2. The Sublime, Enthusiasm and Fanaticism

Because Islam is characterized by Hegel as a religion of the Sublime, it is necessary to explain what Hegel means by the Sublime. Therefore, we have to go back to Kant. For his analysis of the Sublime is Hegel's point of departure. Moreover, it is Kant who mentions Judaism and Islam as examples of a 'Sublime' conception of God. How surprising it may sound, but in this analysis Kant developed an affirmative theory of religious feeling. Moreover, in that context Kant rehabilitated another feeling that was scorned by Enlightenment philosophers, the feeling called 'enthusiasm'. This rehabilitation shows itself in Hegel too.

Kant's notion of the Sublime is a part of his ethical transformation of the reintroduction of basic platonic ideas in aesthetics of intelligible beauty and the divine by English philosophers like Shaftesbury.[3] Enthusiasm and fanaticism belong to that context too.

Kant mitigates this Platonism by saying that experience of an idea is not a positive 'intellectual' intuition, but still a sensual one, only a negative one. That distinguishes it from the positive sensual experience of beauty. It is the experience of the gap between the faculty of the senses and that of reason. It is the experience of the senses that the senses themselves cannot grasp the intelligible. Kant distinguishes two types of this kind of

[3] Cf. Immanuel Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgment*, Translated by James Creed Meredith, revised edition by Nicolas Walker, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007, p. 101. To the same Greek contexts belong words like 'enthusiasm' and 'fanaticism' cf. Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 'The Sociable Enthousiasts', in: *Shaftesbury Standard Edition*, Bad Canstatt: Frommann Holzboog 1981. II, 1, pp. 177–199. See the lemmata *Enthusiasmus*, *Erhaben, das Erhabene* and *Fanatisch, Fanatismus* in: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1972, Bd. II, pp. 525–528, 624–635, 904–908.

experience, the mathematical one and the dynamical one. Both play a role in Hegel's use of the Sublime in the characterization of Islam.

The Sublime is defined as something that is 'great' above all comparison, absolute, non-comparative magnum. One feels the nearness to the platonic idea that does not have a gradual relation to the appearances. For Kant this idea is only a reflexive idea of emerging from the reflection on the activity of measuring. This non-comparative greatness manifests itself concretely in the deregulation of all sensible comparison. The mathematical experience of the Sublime manifests itself in the activity of measuring according to an absolute standard. Our actual measuring and counting can never grasp something absolute great, because it presupposes not only plurality, but also unity of greatness of as a measure. Every measure presupposes a kind of absolute measure again, that cannot be imagined by the capacity of the sense, the power of imagination. In the face of the true infinity, this endeavour is deemed to fail. However, the endeavour itself is not without sense. It is an expression of the voice of reason that every experience of something given asks for a totality that is infinity and a unity. Nevertheless, this idea is purely ideal, not given in the 'Anschauung', therefore unimaginable. It puts to the test the limits of imagination. Its conception of nature as a totality prompts in us this idea as an underlying ideality that is infinite and a unity at the same time. Therefore, the Sublime is not in an object of nature, but an idea in the mind of a person that contemplates nature and estimates his experiences in the light of the idea. In nature itself, it is of course especially limitless nature, nature devoid of form, an ocean for example, that causes in us the feeling of the Sublime.[4]

In an ethical perspective the quality of the feeling of our discontinue relation to the ideal world is called 'Achtung'.[5] The experience of the Sublime is in line with this feeling. However, sensible-aesthetical experience, the experience of the sublime is essentially related to sensual pleasure ('Lust'). Nevertheless, it is a mixed pleasure, because this essentially negative experience cannot produce pleasure in the normal, positive sense of the word. Therefore, Kant explains that the 'overkill' of the senses by the Sublime produces an unpleasant feeling that at the same is enjoyed. It is pleasure mediated by unpleasure. This combination of negative and

[4] Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, pp. 75–76.

[5] Cf. John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1992, p. 283.

positive feelings is typical for the experience of the 'dynamical Sublime, that is of the supersensible idea as overwhelming power.

The dynamical experience of the Sublime is the experience of an overwhelming nature that threatens me in my sensible, concrete existence, but at the same time reminds me of my supersensible ethical essence and destiny. It is an aesthetical, contemplative experience, so from a safe distance, not an experience of a real destruction by nature. Nevertheless, it is a 'moving' contemplation. The starry heaven above me, the experience of the infinity of the oceans, only limited by the sky horizon, arouses in me a contemplative mood. To contemplate the thundering waterfalls arouses in me feelings of safeness and threat at the same time.

Nature in this case is the occasion for the experience of the transcendent 'sublime' ideas of God and the immortality of my soul. In this line Kant, following Burke, reinterprets the feelings of terror and pain that accompany the feeling of the Sublime especially with regard to religion. For Burke he Sublime is the vast, infinite in nature that arouses a feeling of 'astonishment' that is filled with horror. A feeling familiar to it is 'awe'.[6] 'Awe' is the positive feeling of power as the Sublime.

With the help of this idea, Kant criticizes the Enlightenment thinkers that condemned religion with the words of Lucretius, who said that human feelings of pain and terror created the Gods. For Kant, this is only true for superstition. True religion transcends that level and discovers in nature the supernatural reality of the Sublime.

Confronted with the ideas man feels the insufficiency of his sense and the imagination to grasp this idea of reason. Therefore, it is the feeling of something terrifying and attractive at the same time, according to Kant.[7] The Sublime invites us therefore to appreciate it insofar is it is against the interest of our senses. Therefore, this feeling is related not only to ideas in general, but to the idea of the good in particular.

In this context, he rehabilitates the religious feeling of 'enthusiasm', of being 'inspired'. Like the idea of the Sublime, this feeling, and 'fanaticism' too, belongs to the platonic world of feelings related to transcendent ideas. These kind of feelings were condemned in circles of Enlightenment

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[6] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Adam Philips, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998, p. 62.

[7] One feels the vicinity of Kant to the later philosopher of religion Rudolf Otto, who described the religious experience of the 'Holy' as something 'tremendum et fascinosum', terrifying and attractive at the same time.

thinking. According to John Locke, enthusiasm is the resource of all trouble causing self-made prophets.[8] Voltaire criticized Islam as an enthusiastic rage.

Influenced by Shaftesbury, Kant gives the notion of 'enthusiasm' a positive turn by means of the idea of the Sublime and distinguishes it from the superstitious feeling of 'Schwaermerei' or fanaticism. The source of inspiration called enthusiasm is the idea of the Good. Because the Sublime transcends all senses, it stimulates us by 'enthusiasm' to transcend our resistance sensible nature is offering and, as morality does, to 'violate' our senses. Therefore, the Sublime has to do with the power of our heart, inspired by moral laws, to transcend obstacles of our sensuality. That 'emotional' power is enthusiasm. Therefore, enthusiasm is 'the idea of the good connected with affect.'[9] Without this affect there is not a thing really done good, as Shaftesbury already said.[10] Fanaticism for Kant is a delusion that searches for a vision beyond all bounds of sensibility.[11] Rousseau, in his Émile, says of fanaticism what Kant says of enthusiasm and praises it as the courage to risk your life at the service of the most sublime virtues.[12] Hegel uses both words together, both participating in the positive and negative aspects of the sublime.

Then Kant adds an often-quoted phrase that expresses essentially Hegel's understanding of Judaism and Islam too:

> Perhaps there is no more Sublime passage in the Jewish Law than the commandment: Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, etc. This commandment can alone explain the enthusiasm which the Jewish people, in there moral period, felt for their religion when comparing themselves with others, or the pride inspired by Mohammedanism.[13]

Kant's theory of the Sublime and enthusiasm was influential. It lies at the basis of Schleiermacher's and Rudolf Otto's theory of religious experience. It inspired Herder to a new view on the relation between a religion and its natural 'habitat', for example the 'formless desert' where Mohammad's

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[8] John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding*, I, II, London/New York: Everyman's Library 1974, II, pp. 288–296.

[9] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 102.

[10] Shaftesbury, *Letter on Enthousiasm*, Shaftesbury Standard Edition, hrsg. Gerd Hemmerich und Wolfgang Benda, Stuttgart: Fromman-Holzboog 1981, p. 372.

[11] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 105.

[12] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion 1966, p. 408.

[13] Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, p. 104.

imagination received in (contemplative) solitude his visions.[14] It influenced Herder, Goethe and Hegel in their positive understanding of the 'stretch' of religious imaginative power (Phantasy) that reaches its limits in the Sublime and becomes distorted or grotesque. It created a positive view on the imaginary world of primitive and oriental religion. It created, although wrongly, the idea that Islam does not know any form of pictorial art. Therefore, the attention, not totally wrongly, turned to poetry as the true vehicle of the Sublime. Because of the aesthetic background of the reflection on the Sublime, religious texts, primitive myths and the Old Testament were now appreciated as literature.

3. Islam in the Lectures of Philosophy of Religion

This idea of the Sublime as transcending radically at finite reality, and at the same time tendentionally nullifying it, is the point of departure of Hegel's description of Judaism and Islam.

Judaism is first of all called the 'religion of the Sublime' but at the end, Islam is the true universal religion of the Sublime. The common notion of the religions of the Sublime is the conception of God as spiritual and as one. As 'one' the God of Judaism transcends the plurality of gods of Greek polytheism. In Greek polytheism the divine is still submerged in the unity with especially human nature and its virtues, but in the religion of the Sublime, the divine withdraws itself from nature, from human nature too and the different spiritual powers are concentrated in 'the one'. Not the identity of God with these manifestations, but the difference is the central issue.

The difference is 'thinking' and even 'subject' at the one side, and nature and finiteness at the other. God is a spiritual subjective unity and, therefore, for the first time deserves for us the name of 'God'. We clearly recognize Kant's idea of the Sublime. God himself is not so much Sublime, but his relation to the material, sensual world makes him Sublime, for he manifests him self negatively in the material world, in nature, in finitude. In relation to the divine, the material world shows its radical insufficiency, its finitude, its 'nothingness' in relation to God. The essential characteristic of the Sublime is 'power'. In this sense, the God of the Sublime is not substance anymore, but 'subjective'. It may surprise the reader to find the

[14] J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1989, p. 300.

word 'subjective' here, for very often in Hegel the 'Sublime' conception of God as unity belongs to the idea of 'substance', the world of Spinoza and of pantheism. We will meet this world in the section about Hegel's Aesthetics. God as subject manifests himself fully in Christianity. However, a first step to this conception is made here in as far God is conceived as power that posited the natural finite world. (L2 27, 670/561) Nevertheless, this finite world has no independency at all. It is nothing compared to its creator. Therefore, this positing is neither a self-positing of God in his reality, as is the case with the Christian God.

As a subject this 'positing' God is thinking, which means that the content of this absolute power is 'wisdom'. Because in God the reasonable determinations of freedom as well as the ethical determinations are united in one goal. Therefore, an essential mark of God is 'holiness'. He alone is 'holy'. Holiness is a characteristic only of God, not of the Gods. Kant is fully present in all those determinations. This God has no sensual outwardness, and therefore images are impossible, for it is a pure thinking subjectivity. This wise thinking, himself determining and judging God is a creator-God. He is the creator of the world as something outside him.

However, in the religion of the Sublime the relation between God and the world is an external one. God as the 'one and only' has no plurality in itself, does not dwell in plurality, unless by debasing it to accidentality. It is by God's undeserved goodness that creation exists and God's justice shows that creation has no subsistency against God. God is called Sublime not as such, but because of his negative relation to the world. The characteristic of sublimity is determined by God's negative relation to the world. Here again Kant's influence is clear. Kant's experience of the Sublime is ontologized. It is in the negation of the sensual world that the Sublime has its own identity. In relation to God, the creation itself is always only a dependent and accidental reality. God makes the creation feel its nothingness. For Hegel this means that this creation is not the true self-determination of God. This is only the case in the Christian God who realizes his self-determination as creation in himself, which means the forthcoming of the Son. Therefore, the Christian God is an internal plural unity, which means a concrete unity.

What is said here about the religion of the Sublime is equally true for Judaism and for Islam. Both are religions of 'the One and Only' that has no positive relation to its creation and for whom his creation has no subsistency. He is the 'always Other' for whom all finitude is 'nothing'.

For the relation to man, this means that man is characterized by 'fear for God' and offering 'servitude' and not by freedom in the full sense of

the word. Now 'fear of God' is not only negative, it has an aspect of freedom. Hegel stresses this aspect especially in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* of 1824. The 'fear for God' liberates man from his particular interest and makes it possible for him to go for the one and only true goal. Therefore, 'fear' is a 'moment' of freedom. Therefore, with an aside to Schleiermacher, it has nothing to do with a feeling of total dependency. (L2 24, 444/344) He repeats a Kantian formulation by saying that the fear of God liberates man of al his dependencies; that is of being restricted by particular interests. It is the freedom of self-interest. (L2 27, 679/571) This 'fear' resembles very much enthusiasm. However, the good still is done, not so much because it is a commandment of his 'reason', but because it is a commandment of God. That is the element of heteronomy in the religion of the Sublime. According to Hegel, in Jewish religion and in Islam lack of freedom is the basis of the relation with God. In Christianity freedom is the basis.

However, what is the difference between Judaism and Islam? Moreover, which role does Christianity play in Hegel's determination of that difference? The specific 'national' exclusive relationship between God and the Jewish people is 'denationalized' by Islam. (M2, 158/64; L2 24, 437–438/337) To a certain extent, this difference seems to be marginal. Islam is just 'denationalized Judaism'. However, this 'denationalization' is a step forward. Judaism misconceived the notion of God as the 'One' by inferring from its uniqueness a relation to only one people. Therefore, 'nationalism' is essential for Judaism. Hegel mentions indeed the universal perspectives present in the Psalms and the prophetic books, but for Hegel these are later developments, that do not really change the basic conception of the Jewish people as the 'chosen people'. (L2 27, 683–686/557, footnote) However, Christianity, although it can be conceived as a family and in that sense a nation too, wants that God should be known and honoured everywhere. Interestingly, Hegel does not describe Christianity as 'denationalized Judaism' as he does with Islam. That is because Christianity, distinct from Judaism, is the religion of freedom, while Islam, still being Judaism, is the religion of heteronomy and unfreedom. Although denationalized, Islam is still Judaism and therefore at the same time the real counterpart of Christianity, for because of its universalism, it is at the same level of Christianity. Hegel says very clearly in his Lectures of 1824:

> Here there is no limitation to a particular people; humanity relates itself to the One as purely abstract self-consciousness. This is the characteristic of the Islamic religion. In it Christianity finds its antithesis, because it occupies a sphere equivalent to that of the Christian religion. It is a spiritual religion

> like the Jewish, but its God is (available) for self-consciousness only within the abstract knowing spirit. Its God is on a par with the Christian god to the extent that no particularity is retained. Anyone, from any people, who fears God, is pleasing to him, and human beings have value only to the extent that they take as their truth the knowledge that this is the One, the essence. The differentiation of subjects according to their station in life or class is sublated; there may be classes, there may be even slaves, but this is merely accidental. (L3 24, 242–243/172)

Nevertheless, characteristic for Christianity is the reintegration of finitude and plurality within God, by which the gulf between the finite and the infinite is bridged and the finite obtains its own value and concrete reality. The basic expression of the Christian God as this unity of unity and plurality, of the infinite and the finite is for Hegel the dogma of the Trinity.

So it is in the conception of Trinity that Christianity is opposed to Islam. The antithesis consists in the fact that in Christianity, spirituality is developed *concretely* within itself and is known as Trinity, as spirit; "and that human history, the relationship to the One, is likewise a *concrete* history, (…)." (Idem) Because Christianity has Trinity, the history of man is a concrete history. However, Islam hates and condemns all concreteness. "Its God is the absolute One, in relation to whom human beings retain for themselves no purpose, no private domain, nothing peculiar to themselves." (Idem) Hegel continues to show that this conception of God has specific consequences for the anthropology of Islam:

> Inasmuch as they exist, humans do in any case create a private domain for themselves in their inclinations and interests, and these are all the more savage and unrestrained in this case because they lack reflexion. But coupled with this is also the complete opposite, namely, the tendency to let everything take its own course, indifference with respect to every purpose, absolute fatalism, indifference to life; no practical purpose has any essential value. But since human beings are in fact practical and active, their purpose can only be to bring about the veneration of the One in all humanity. Thus the religion of Islam is essential fanatical. (Idem)

Hegel wants to say that because of its abstract conception of divine unity, Islam cannot cope with concrete unity of unity and plurality in man of his passions either. Because no reflexion can bring the passions into unity, there is the extremism of either following the passions wildly or doing nothing, fatalism. Next to fatalism comes fanaticism. For man still is a practical being wanting to realize goals. Therefore, the only goal of a Muslim life can be to evoke in all human beings the feeling of the veneration

of the One. Therefore, the Islamic religion is essentially fanatic. Hegel concludes his thoughts with a comparison of Islam with Enlightenment thinking of God. For the Enlightenment thinks God to as the one, the 'highest being' without any determination and qualification. In this respect, Islam resembles very much Enlightenment reflection. Nevertheless, the difference is, that in the Enlightenment, that glorifies reflexion, finite human subjective reflexion is the cause of the 'emptiness' of the idea of God, while in Islam this emptiness is threatening all human reflexion. Indeed Hegel looks to the religions from the East from the point of view of Spinoza and Kant, two eminent Enlightenment thinkers, the first one as a thinker of an undifferentiated, unsubjective substance, the second one as a thinker of the duality of spirit and matter, reason and senses and so on. Now those religions reflect him back his own perspective. But coming back to Hegel's anthropology of Islam, what does fanaticism mean in this context?

4. Islam, Monotheism and Fanaticism in the *Lectures on Philosophy of Religion*

For Hegel all abstract monotheism is fanatic, which means that not only Islam, but also Judaism is fanatic too. The Jews are 'fanatic in 'stubbornness', which means that they develop a fanatic mode of defence and sticking to their God if they feel attacked in their religion. Islam is known by 'fanaticism of conversion', for as a denationalized', universal Judaism, it tries to convert everybody to the faith in the One. Hegel's careful exclusion of Christianity from fanatic monotheism feeds the suspicion that he is engaged in a controversy not familiar for us about the fanatic character of monotheism in general. Indeed David Hume developed in his influential *The natural History of Religion* (1757) the theory that all monotheism is fanatic. Comparing the monotheistic religions Judaism, Islam and Christianity with Graeco-Roman polytheism, he comes to the conclusion that all monotheism is exclusive and does not accept other Gods. So therefore, monotheism is fanatic. To the contrary, Graeco-Roman polytheism has an easy relation to other Gods and integrated easily the Gods of other peoples in its pantheon.[15] The book was translated into German very early in 1759 and was known by Kant. Kant and Hegel certainly read what

[15] David Hume, 'The natural history of Religion' in: David Hume, *Writings on Religion*, ed. Anthony Flew, Ilinois: Open Court Publishing Company 1992, pp. 145–148.

Rousseau said about these questions in the chapter about 'civil religion' in his *The social contract*. He reproaches the Christians for breaking the bond between the laws and the Gods in every nation, which the Romans respected and integrated in the Empire.[16] Hegel mentions this behaviour of Greeks and Romans dealing with the fanaticism of Jews and Muslims. (L2 27, 683/575 footnote) However, Hegel relates fanaticism exclusively to the religions of the Sublime, because they are not capable to think plurality in unity. Specifically the idea of the Trinity shows that the Christian God integrates plurality and therefore Christianity is never called a fanatic religion.

To this, we have to add, as we already said in the paragraph about the Sublime, that fanaticism is for Hegel not just something negative, because it is related to the positive aspects of the Sublime, as well as to the negative. Therefore, he does not use the Kantian distinction between 'enthusiasm' as something positive and 'fanaticism' as something negative. Hegel is more in line with Rousseau. Nothing great is done without it, according to Rousseau, and it enables it to risk death for sublime virtues. Fanaticism as relating yourself to the Sublime, as affectingly striving for the One, is positive insofar man in this relation transcends, finite, particular interests, fear of death and so on, but negative insofar as it nullifies all finite, determined things. This interpretation of fanaticism in Islam is dominant in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. However, before we go over to that chapter we will first give a short evaluation of Hegel's interpretation of Islam in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*.

5. Evaluation: Denationalization, Monotheism and Trinity

To describe Islam as 'denationalized Judaism' is adequate to a certain extent. The prophet Muhammad considered himself to be a prophet in the tradition of the Jewish prophets and of Christianity. It recognizes Abraham as a common ancestor and, like Judaism and Christianity but different from other religions in the Middle East, it repudiated the phenomenon of human sacrifice. On the other hand, Christianity is 'denationalized' or 'universalized' Judaism too. Hegel opposes both Islam and Christianity as universal religions against Judaism as a nationalistic religion. However, Islam is 'universalized Judaism' and Christianity is not. Christianity really

[16] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social*, Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions 1973, p. 208.

transcends Judaism. Nevertheless, Christians from the beginning conceived themselves as children of the common ancestor. They consider Christ to be foretold by the prophets, especially the prophets that manifest the universalizing tendencies of Judaism. For Hegel those universalizing tendencies were marginal to the idea of the 'chosen people' and to the idea of the given law. However, the Christians did not think so from the beginning! For them it was and is the real and legitimate outcome and fulfilling of the Jewish religion.[17] Nevertheless, of course, Christianity is in a different way 'universalized Judaism' as Islam is.

Christianity universalized Judaism by abolishing the Mosaic Law. In a polemic with Judaism, it used the 'Jewish' argument, that the father of Judaism himself, Abraham, living before Moses, did not know that law. Islam did the other way around. It universalized Judaism by denationalizing and so universalizing the law. The problem here is Hegel's interpretation of Judaism. Hegel does not like Judaism enough to be able to say that Christianity is 'universalized Judaism'. In some texts, in his Aesthetics for example, Hegel even seems to like Islam more than Judaism.

Not only because of his Christian teleology, but also because of a lack of sources, Hegel did not go in debate with the self-conception of Islam in relation to Judaism and Christianity. Islam considers itself to be the synthesis of Judaism and Christianity. It succeeded to overcome the one-sidedness of both religions. Judaism is a legal religion within the world, while Christianity is a spiritual, mystical religion that leaves the world, as becomes clear in the phenomenon of monasticism. Therefore, Muslims welcome the Reformation, because Protestantism abolished monasticism and brought Christianity again in the world. But because the result of this Reformation was secularism,[18] it becomes clear that Christianity cannot find the right equilibrium between spirituality and law. Therefore, Islam is the right synthesis of both Judaist innerworldliness and Christian outerworldliness. Especially with regard to the relation between Protestantism and secularism and the absence of monasticism, Hegel could have had a nice discussion with Muslims. Because of this discussion, Hegel should

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[17] Lustiger, Jean-Marie, *Le choix de Dieu, Entretiens avec Jean-Louis Missika et Dominique Wolton*, Paris: Edition de Fallois 1987 p. 49, 357. See also Lustiger, Jean-Marie, 'Christliches Europa—was bedeutet das?' in: Günther Gillessen (ed.) *Zur Problematik von Nation und Konfession*, Regensburg: Pustet 1993, pp. 138–153, p. 142.

[18] That was Muhammad Iqbal's criticism of the Reformation, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing, A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1963, p. 268.

have written a specific chapter on Islam in his philosophy of religion. For this discussion is about which religion is the last and accomplished one. Moreover, Islam has the advantage of being the last world religion.

Hegel's description of the function of the dogma of Trinity, as an integration of the plurality of innerworldy presence of God within God self, has still some plausibility for Christians as is shown in the work of the well-known catholic theologian Karl Rahner. In his article 'Unity and Trinity of God' that he contributed to a volume with the title *The God of Christianity and Islam*, Rahner says: "The monotheistic religions, and they are not identical with monotheistic metaphysics say: the last most original unity that sustains everything and that is infinite and almighty, does not abode in a solitude, far away and unreachable by men, but can, without splitting up its unicity, as a unity penetrate in the pluralism of the world and it can be given, concretize itself."[19] The Hegelian overtones in this formulation are unmistakable.

Hegel's attempt to establish a relation between different understandings of God as trinitarian or as monistic monotheism at the one side and differences in the self-understanding of man at the other side is perfectly legitimate, but it is difficult to draw conclusions about actual human behaviour with regard to fanaticism. One should not forget that the negative estimation of religious feelings, as expressed in the discussion about enthusiasm, fanaticism and so on, originated in times of the European religious wars. Moreover, they were Christian wars.

Most important, the description of Islam as a religion of the Sublime, is not just inadequate. However, we have to postpone this evaluation to that in the chapter about Islamic philosophy. There we can explain that Hegel, amongst all kind of misinterpretations, hit a mark. This becomes already a little bit clear in the chapters about Islam in his Philosophy of History. Moreover, we have to interpret that chapter first of all. In this chapter, we find an answer to the question why Islam entered on the scene after the final and absolute religion of Christianity.

6. Islam in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*

In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel speaks about Islam not only in a special chapter about Muhammadism, but in a chapter about

[19] Karl Rahner, 'Einzigkeit und Dreifaltigkeit Gottes' in: Andreas Bsteh (ed.) *Der Gott des Christentums und des Islams*, Mödling: Verlag Sankt Gabriel 1978, pp. 119–137, p. 122 (translation G.S.).

the Crusades too. Both chapters belong to Part IV, the part about the 'Christian Germanic world', that is the world of Western Christianity as it emerges after the fall of the Western Roman Empire. The chapter about Muhammadism is, of course, at the beginning of that part, for Islam originated in the seventh century. The chapter next to it is about the Empire of Charlemagne. The chapter on the Crusades belongs to the section of the Middle Ages and the chapter next to it deals with the transition of feudalism to monarchism, within which the development of the nationalities is discussed.

In the chapter about Islam, Hegel first describes the situation of the young, Christianized Germanic peoples after the great wandering of peoples, following the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. They tried to realize their freedom, but instead of thinking along general rules, laws and principles, they got lost, according to Hegel, because of their underdeveloped nature, in a lot of particularities, dependencies and accidentalities. Therefore, the opposite tendency towards generality and integration in a totality had to appear and this happened in the 'Revolution of the East'.[20] In fact, this revolution is Islam as a religion of the Sublime that liberated itself from the particularity of Judaism, stressed unity at the cost of plurality and particularity.

It made the adoration of the One to the goal of all subjectivity and it even made subjectivity in its turn merge into the One. At the surface, it seems that Hegel refers with this remark to mystical trends in Islam, for which it would not be untrue. However, a striking comparison with Indian religion shows Hegel's true intention. Characteristical for Indian religion is according to Hegel the monastic immersion in the absolute. However, the Islamic way to immerse into the absolute is opposite to this. It is innerworldly activistic.[21] Subjectivity in Islam is alive, an activity, it enters into the world to negate it and by doing so it mediates the adoration of the One. Moreover, indeed, although Islam knows mysticism, it does not know monastic life. The essence of this activity is conversion, to bring the whole world to the adoration of the One and Only.

Then Hegel gives a short, and partly because of its shortness, not incorrect description of some Islamic principles, the description he did not give in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. He stresses, like Kant, the

[20] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, transl. J. Sibree, London: Henry G. Bohn 1857, pp. 369–370.

[21] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, p. 369.

prohibition on images and says correctly that Mohammed is a prophet, and, unlike Jesus, still a human being, not elevated above human weaknesses.

Hegel gives as 'the' characteristic quality of Islam: "that in actual existence nothing can become fixed, but that everything is to expand itself in activity and life in the boundless amplitude of the world, so that the worship of the One remains the only bond by which the whole is capable of uniting."[22] Thus is the world of the Sublime. Nothing is fixed. Only the One is important and therefore in the expansion of Islam all barriers, all limits, cast distinctions and so on disappear. Only man as a believer is important. Hegel certainly judges Islam in the right way. Hegel thinks, like Herder who always made a relation between a religion and its natural environment, that this conception of the limitless, unstableness of all things is influenced by the natural 'habitat' of Islam, the desert: "Here Spirit exists in its simplest form, and the sense of the Formless has its special abode; for in the desert nothing can be brought into a firm consistent shape."[23] For Kant, 'formless' nature, like a wild ocean, is the vehicle for the experience of the Sublime and Hegel, following Herder therefore takes the 'formlessness' of the desert as the source of the Islamite experience of the Sublime.[24] Hegel mentions Mohammed's flight from Mecca to Medina and stresses especially the vast conquests that started already during his lifetime, but were realized under his successors. Hegel takes over the accepted prejudice of the Western world that the Muslims spread their faith by violence, killing everybody that did not want to convert. Only later they became more lenient to the conquered. Instead of becoming Muslim, they had to pay a poll tax.

In this context, Hegel talks about enthusiasm and fanaticism as essentially related to the 'abstract' worship of the One. 'It is the essence of fanaticism to bear only a desolating destructive relation to the concrete, but that of Mohametanism was, at the same time, capable of the greatest elevation- an elevation free from all petty interest, and united with all the virtues that appertain to magnanimity and valour.'[25] While Hegel in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion compares the islamic religion of the abstract One with the natural religion of the Enlightenment, he now compares Islamic fanaticism to the terror of the French Revolution.

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[22] Idem, p. 371.

[23] Idem.

[24] J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1989, p. 300.

[25] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, p. 372.

Immediately after the just quoted mixed estimation of Islamic fanaticism he adds: '*La religion et la terreur* was the principle in this case, as with Robespierre, *la liberté et la terreur*.'[26] Again, like in the Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion Hegel tries to make a psychological typology with the help of the concept of fanaticism. It has the psychological affect that, while Europeans are involved in a multitude of relations, being a bundle of them, in Islam the individual is *one* passion and *that alone*. Recklessness in it positive and negative aspects. It produces, as specifically Islam poetry shows, a warmth and fervour, a glow that is the perfect freedom of fancy of every fetter—an absorption in the life of its object and the sentiment it inspires, so that selfishness and egotism are utterly banished. Lawrence of Arabia ante dato! In addition, Hegel concludes about Islam: "Never has enthusiasm, as such, performed greater deeds."[27] This is specifically said of Muslim enthusiasm, because it is abstract and therefore all-comprehensive, restrained by nothing, without limits and indifferent to all sides.

However, what is or was the place of Islam in history? Hegel describes the rapid speed of the high development of the arts and the sciences in the Arab empire and the good quality of their government. Their decline is caused by the fact that the Islamic universality of the Sublime does not produce determined forms. "But the great empire of the Caliphs did not last long: for on the basis presented by Universality nothing is firm. It fell at the same time as the Empire of the Franks. After them the Ottomans came. At the end was this: Fanaticism having cooled down, no moral principle remained in men's souls."[28]

Because a new moral principle is not regained, the turn is to the Europeans, according to Hegel. They profited from the Islamic developments. Hegel describes how European valour idealized itself to a noble chivalry in the struggle with the Saracens. How science, especially philosophy came from the Arabs to Europe. How the beautiful Islamic poetry inspired German literature, especially in Goethe's 'West-östlicher Divan'. However, is that all? What is the philosophical significance of the fact that the values of chivalry, science, philosophy and art came from the Islamic world to Europe. To discover this significance a glance on a remark about Islam in the chapter about the Crusades is revealing.

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[26] Idem, p. 372.
[27] Idem, p. 373.
[28] Idem, p. 374.

There Hegel says that the Crusades had the same effect as the struggle of the Karolingians with the Saracens. The acquaintance with Islamic enthusiasm promoted the virtues of chivalry and this spirit was diffused over the whole of Europe by the Crusades. It civilized Europe: "the ferocity and savage valour that characterized the predatory life of the barbarians (the Europeans!! G.S.) (. . .), was elevated by religion and then kindled to a noble enthusiasm through contemplating the boundless magnanimity of Oriental prowess. For Christianity also contains that element of boundless abstraction and freedom; the oriental chivalric spirit found therefore in Occidental hearts a response, which paved the way for their attaining a nobler virtue than they had previously known."[29]

Therefore, Hegel is putting here again, like in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Islam and Christianity on the same level. They are both characterized by universality and in that sense by freedom from particularity, called abstraction by Hegel. And Islam inspires Christians to the realization of their specific, concrete universality. The result was the emergence of new ecclesiastical orders or knighthood. Hegel aims at the phenomenon of templar orders that were engaged in works of charity. Hegel mentions this orders of nobler virtue together with the transfer of Arab sciences to Europe and calls them, in the next chapter about the disappearance of feudalism in Europe: "moral phenomena tending in the direction of a general principle."[30] Therefore, the encounter with Islam stimulated the direction to generality. In practical-ethical life this tendency to general principles manifest itself in the transition of feudalistic particularity in monarchical sovereignty, based on a political body, in which all individual interest are governed by law, while in feudalism it still was possible for 'vassals' to maintain their personal interest against the prince. Hegel refers clearly to the development of theories of sovereignty of Hobbes and the development of the state of estates. Therefore, generality first had to transcend all particularities in which the Christian German peoples were immersed, as Hegel said in the beginning of his chapter about Islam.

However, this general principle cannot deny particularity. The denial of particularity was the weak spot of the universalism of the Islamic empires that could not find a definite political mode of existence. Christianity unites generality with particularity, as the dogma of the Trinity shows.

[29] Idem, p. 412.
[30] Idem, p. 415.

Therefore, Hegel relates the general principal of the law to the particularity of nations, in which this political constitution is born. So now, the philosophical significance of abstract universalism of Islam is to bring the western, Christian German world to the development of the necessary moment of generality in law that at the same time is only concrete in the particularity of the nationalities. In this way, the abstract universality of the Islamic world is at service of the development of the concrete universality of Christianity in the form of the modern particular European states.

Nevertheless, what is left for the Islamic world? Does it not exist anymore?: "But the East itself, when by degrees enthusiasm has vanished, sank into the grossest vice, the most hideous passions became dominant, and as sensual enjoyment was sanctioned in the first form which Mahometan doctrine assumed, and was exhibited as a reward of the faithful in Paradise, it took the place of fanaticism."[31] According to Hegel, religiously legitimized voluptuousness at the end replaces enthusiasm or fanaticism. By that, Islam lost its vigour. "At present, driven back into its Asiatic and African quarters, and tolerated only in one corner of Europe through the jealousy of Christian Powers, Islam has long vanished from the stage of history at large, and has retreated into Oriental ease and repose."[32]

7. Evaluation: Teleology and a Positive Appreciation of Islam

Of course, Hegel's teleological reading of the function of Islam in the development of Europe is impossible. It actually does not give a solution for the problems that Islam causes to the view that Christianity is the absolute, fulfilling religion.

Besides this, the positive tone in Hegel's description of Islam is striking. He admires Islamic 'enthusiasm' and 'fanaticism' and praises Muslims for their magnanimity. He even dares to say that Islam civilized Europe! His admiration for Islam is caused by influence of romantic thinkers like Herder, by the translation work done by the romantics in Germany and by Goethe's appropriation of Islamic poetry in his West-Eastern Diwan Hegel refers to.[33] We will come back on it when we talk about Hegel's interpretation of Islamic art.

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[31] Idem, p. 374.

[32] Idem.

[33] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag 1974.

Hegel's formulation that in Islam no finite reality can be fixed, but that everything is destined to expand itself in activity and life in the boundless amplitude of the world, so that the worship of the One remains the only bond by which the whole is can be united, is not a bad interpretation of the Islamic worldview. It is confirmed by the famous orientalist Louis Massignon in his analysis of the 'arabesque', the well-known meandering ornamental pattern in Islamic art. He interprets this meandering as an expression of the Islamic worldview. It is the negation of all fixed forms, of the permanence of nature; it stresses the fugitive character of everything, which evokes, by its absence the face of the Lord, the only permanent thing that keeps all together.[34]

Rightly, Hegel stressed the activist character of Islam against the monastic tradition of Hindus. Indeed, although there are mystical fraternities and some mystics were unmarried, the phenomenon of monasticism with the pledge of chastity is unknown even unwanted in official Islam. In this sense, Islam far more resembles Judaism.

There are some common prejudices in his work too. So the idea that Islam converted people by violence. It is a too long story to explain it totally, but first of all, we have to say that the Muslims were welcomed as liberators by many Christians that suffered from the violence of their Christian emperor. The spread of Islamic rule of law did not imply the conversion by violence of Christians and Jews. They had the right to live according to their own laws, if they recognized Islamic rule of law as the general rule of law.

Hegel's idea of Islamic paradise as a kind of reward for oversexed believers does not understand that the symbolism of women in paradise ('houris') means the restoration of the right sexual relations and behaviour as they were established in paradise.[35] This position is to a certain extent familiar with Saint Thomas Aquinas' opinion, that in paradise, because of man's purity, sexual pleasures could be more intense than after the fall, in life as we know it.[36]

What about his verdict of Islam in his time? To a certain extent, it was true. The Ottoman Empire had lost its vigour and power. Therefore, it was called the 'sick man of Europe'. Nevertheless, what Hegel did not know, was that already in his time the first moves toward a reformation in the

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[34] Louis Massignon, *En Islam Jardins et mosquées*, Paris: 1981, pp. 17–18.

[35] Louis Massignon, 'Mystique et continence en Islam', in: Louis Massignon, *Parole donnée*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil 1983, pp. 273–280, 275.

[36] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia 98, 2 ad 3.

empire were started. End eighteenth century, beginning nineteenth century, the Empire started to implement the Western educational system. After Hegel's death in 1832, with the famous reform decree of 1839, it began to implement even a western law system. The philosopher Auguste Comte congratulated the sultan for his endeavour.

Like Hegel, the famous Muslim reformist Al-Afghani (1838–1897) thought that it was necessary first to realize a religious reformation in order to make a social revolution possible. He is said to have been inspired by the Reformation in Europe. It is very seductive to look for Hegel's influence here, for Hegel thought that the protestant reformation of the Christian world was a precondition of the French Revolution. But it was the protestant French historian and politician Guizot (1787–1874) that influenced Al Afghani in this respect.[37]

However, Hegel certainly influenced the famous Indian-Pakistani reform thinker, poet and Nobel prize winner Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877–1938). He too was engaged in discussions about the example of Luther and the Reformation, but scorned Reformation for its secularist results. In England, he got his philosophical education first of all in English neo-hegelianism, by Mactaggart, and went to Germany.[38] In Germany, he learned to love the same poet that Hegel loved, Goethe, because of his adequate, dynamic understanding of Islam. Iqbal was positively interested in the interaction, in romantic times, between Islamic and German literature. He praised Hegel for his interpretation of the famous mystic Rumi. He quotes Hegel and compares his 'spiritual' worldview with Islamic worldviews and used Hegel's idea of God as an absolute ego to stress the personal character of God and the activist ego character of human beings.[39] Essentially he is known for his activist interpretation of Islam and his criticism of 'the ease and repose' of the Islamic world and therefore of fatalism and pantheism. We met the word 'fatalism' in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* and we will meet the word 'pantheism' in the next chapters. However, it is already clear here that those words were fashionable for a long time. Moreover, they are criticized by Iqbal, not because they were just untrue,

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[37] Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism. Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din 'al-Afghani'*, by Nikkie R. Keddie, Berkely, Los Angels, London: University of California Press 1983, pp. 42, 82, 171.

[38] Annemarie Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing. A Study into the Religious Ideas of Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, Leiden: E.J. Brill 1963, p. 37.

[39] Sir Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Lahore: Kashmiri Bazar 1962, p. 71.

but because they represented too a kind of self (mis)understanding of Islam that should be criticized. Like all reform thinkers of the nineteenth century, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, Iqbal defends activism. In addition, this defence resembles very much Hegel's stress on Islamic activism and dynamic presence in the world. In how far he was influenced directly of indirectly by Hegel's description of Islam in *the Philosophy of History* as activism, so perfectly fitting in Iqbals worldview is difficult to trace. A source tells us that he wrote an examination paper in Germany on the topic of World history.[40] Later Iqbal left Hegel and looked for support for his activism to vitalism and Nietzsche.

8. Islam in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*

Hegel told us that the development of the sciences and of philosophy in the Islamic world was finally meant to stimulate their development in the Christian-Germanic world. However, in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel does not analyze that movement. Therefore, we do not find an extensive presentation of the influential philosophies of, for example, Avicenna and Averroes. Why? First of all we have to say, that Hegel does not possess knowledge about Islamic philosophy out of the original sources. He is relying heavily on Tennemann and Buhle. Nevertheless, this explanation does not satisfy. For Tenneman (1761–1819) gives a far more extensive description of Islamic philosophy as Hegel does. At the end he mentions an interesting description by Averroes and by the Jewish philosopher Maimonides of the theological school of the 'Speakers', the 'Mutakallimun' (Arabic) or the Medabberim (Hebraic) or the 'Loquentes' (Latin). That Islamic school had its origin in early Christian theological discussions with philosophy and defends the unsustainability of nature and the non-fixed, fugitive character of things and their laws with respect to Gods omnipotence.[41]

Hegel does the other way around. He mentions that School immediately in the Introduction, after some positive remarks about the rapid development of Arabic sciences. After concluding with praising Arabic philosophy for free, brilliant and deep imagination, without specifying to

[40] Schimmel, *Gabriel's Wing*, p. 37.

[41] Wilhelm Gotlieb Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Leipzig: Barth 1789–1819, Bd. 8, p. 441.

what he refers to, he continues in part A with an elaborate exposition of the Medabberim.

In B of the section about Arabic philosophy he describes what is traditionally called Islamic philosophy under the title 'commentators of Aristotle'.[42] But here, contrary to Tennemann, he gives only short list of the well know names from Al Kindi and Al Farabi to Avicenna and Averroes, including the famous critic of Islamic philosophy and theology al Ghazali, whom he calls a witty sceptic. He mentions their dates and works, tells an anecdote and that is it. He concludes with saying that their function was to make the West acquainted with Aristotle. That is all, for that was all they had to do! The section ends with a paragraph (C) about the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages. Indeed Jewish philosophy of the Middle Ages functioned in the context of the revival of philosophy in the Arabic world. Just like the Christians of the Middle East, they knew Arabic and wrote in Arabic language. As a thinker, Hegel only mentions Maimonides.

Hegel's general judgment about Arabic philosophy is that it did not contribute something specifically to the development of the principle of philosophy. Therefore, he tells nothing about the real contribution they made to the development of western medieval philosophy. To a certain extent Hegel is excused, for this contribution was not the focus of the sources like Tenneman he used. You can find far more Islamic philosophy in Tennemann than Hegel gives. Nevertheless, Tennemann judges that it is Aristotelism corrupted by Neo-Platonism and that there is nothing original in Arabic philosophy. Hegel just adopts this judgment. At last, mediaeval philosophy as such, whether Islamic or Christian, has no specific relevance for the development of philosophy according to Hegel. For him it is philosophy in service of theology and it had as its only principle the principle of revelation.

Probably because he wants to find something special and different in the Islamic worldview, he pays ample attention to the passage from Maimonides about the Muslim theologians, the mutakallimun or medabberim, that defend the omnipotence of God against all (semi)autonomy of finite things. But by going back to Maimonides' story about them, Hegel present this school that criticized philosophy and even, by the mouth of al-Ghazali, dealt a blow to Islamic philosophy, as the characteristic Islamic

[42] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, I, II, III, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1971, II, pp. 515, 517, 522.

philosophy. That of course, is impossible. Still, amazingly perhaps, Hegel has a point by paying attention to that school. We come back on this issue in the evaluation at the end of this section.

Like Tennemann, Hegel's quotes extensively Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*, in which he mentions a discussion in early Islamic theology, caused by the influence of Greek philosophy, about the unity of God. Maimonides refers to the position of the rationalists, the school of the Mutazila (the Mutazilá in Hegel's quotation), this school denied the possibility of all plurality, that means of a plurality of attributes of God, at the same time it severely criticizes all anthropomorphism and tried to interpret the anthropomorphisms of the Koran allegorically. He mentions their opponents the Asharites (in Hegel's text 'Assaria'). They defended a literal interpretation of the Koran. All their problems were already present in Christian times, among the Greeks and the Syrians, who tried to defend their Christian truth against the philosophers. When Islam arose, they took over that style of thinking from the Greek and Syriac-Aramaic thinkers. What Hegel fascinates in the philosophy of the medabberim, is exactly the denial of the substantial character of the finite world. Here he finds the theological-philosophical position of Islam that justified him to interpret the Islam as a religion of the Sublime, that is a religion in which the Absolute as 'the One' is absolutely dominating , either giving a shadow of autonomy to the finite world, nor to mans' reason and actions.

It belonged to the repertoire of early Islamic theologians, so Hegel quotes Maimonides again, to deny the possibility of certain knowledge of things, because one could always think the opposite. They interpreted the world as a collection of atoms without any relation, so that all conjunctions are something accidental. It does not belong to the nature of things to have this or that accidentent. The accidents itself are just coming up and passing away, all dependent of the creative force of God. It is just a matter of habit that fire moves upward, that the earth is moving around a centre. God could have arranged it otherwise. Hegel is naming the classical topics of that theological discussion.[43] Because in this position only God himself is a 'substantial being' Hegel's association with pantheism is understandable: "This pantheism, if you want Spinozism, is the position, the general point of view of oriental poets, historians and philosophers."[44]

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[43] For an up to date exposition of these discussions see: William Montgomery Watt and Michel Marmura, *Der Islam I, II, III*, Stuttgart-Berlin: Kohlhammer 1985, Bd. II in: 'Die Religionen der Menschheit' Bd. 25, pp. 368 ff.

[44] Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, II, p. 519.

Hegel characterizes the Islamic worldview in general with this word. For him, this 'Spinozistic' worldview represents the idea of the Sublime. God as the only, the persistent One is, in its abstract negativity, the basic concept of the oriental world of representations.

For the qualification of the Islamic world as pantheism Hegel relies on F. A. G. Tholuck who published in 1821 one of the first books on Islamic mysticism in Europe called *Sufism or the Pantheistic Theosophy of the Persians* (Sufismus sive Theosophia Persarum Pantheistica).[45] Another book he wrote, quoted by Hegel, was *Anthology of Oriental Mysticism* (Blütensammlung aus der morgenländischen Mystik). We put aside now the topic of pantheism. It is an essential issue in the next and last part of this essay. First, we have to ask: Is Hegel's lecture of the history of Arabic philosophy adequate? In addition, if the answer is 'no', as the reader may presume, how is it the possible that Hegel still hits an essential mark in his conception of the Islamic worldview?

9. Evaluation: Philosophy and Religion of the Sublime

What is true and what is false in this representation of Islamic philosophy? As we already said, Hegel underestimates the classical Islamic philosophy of the Middle Ages, by saying that they were only commentators of Aristotle. Avicenna, for example, contributed to Western thinking by the unaristotelian distinctions between essence and existence and his ideas of contingency. Of course, Hegel's presentation of a theological school as 'the Islamic philosophy' is wrong.

But at the other hand, this theological position became influential through the work of al-Ghazali, a very important thinker in the world of Islam, sometimes called a 'church father' or 'the Thomas Aquinas of Islam'.[46] Hegel just mentions the name of al-Ghazali among the commentators of Aristotle, as if he was just another philosopher. This was normal for a long time. As the first part of his *The incoherence of the Philosophers* (Sometimes translated as the *Refutation of the Philosophers* or *The destruction of the Philosophers*), al-Ghazali wrote a book on '*The goals of philosophy*', in

[45] For Tholuck and the reception of Islamic mysticism in the West, especially of Rumi, see Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi, Past and Present, East and West*, Oxford: One World 2000, pp. 506 ff.

[46] See for criticism of this epitheta too: Montgomery Watt and Marmura, *Der Islam*, II, pp. 408 ff.

which he summarized the philosophical positions he wanted to attack. It was translated in Latin separately in the twelfth century, without the Prologue in which al-Ghazali exposed his goals, and for a long time this was the only book that was known. Therefore he was regarded, for example by Thomas of Aquinas, as a philosopher and an Aristotelian.[47] In the fourteenth century, the second part seemed to be translated and edited together with Averroes' critical commentary called *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* (Sometimes translated as the *Refutation of the Refutation* or *The Destruction of the Destruction*). Nevertheless, for a long time al Ghazalis criticism of the philosophers was only known by the criticism of this criticism by Averroes.[48]

Tenneman too interprets him as a philosopher and as a sceptic very near to Greek scepticism. However, he tells us too that al-Ghazali was a sceptic not just because he wanted to be a sceptic, but because of theological motives. He wanted to defend the possibility of miracles. Nevertheless, Tennemans complains about the fact that he did not have at his disposal the original sources. He knows al-Ghazali only from the refutation of his thoughts by Averroes in his 'Incoherence'.[49] But Tenneman was right about the theological motives of al-Ghazali. According to the modern point of view, al Ghazali was not just another Islamic Aristotelizing philosopher, but a mystical theologian who criticized philosophy and theology using philosophy to combat philosophy with its own arms.[50] The inspiration for this criticism was the position described by Maimonides as the position of the Asharites against the Mutazila. So he mobilized the criticism of the Mutakallimun against philosophy and especially against rational theology. His target was the philosophy of Avicenna. He is indeed famous for a criticism of causality that resembles very much that of David Hume. Therefore, he was called in old times, as Hegel does a sceptic. However, the aim and the source of his criticism of causality was not scepticism, but to prove the absolute omnipotence of God as first cause in

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[47] Louis Gardet, *L'islam, religion et communauté*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer 1967.

[48] Charles Burnett, 'Arabic into Latin: the reception of Arabic philosophy into Western Europe', in: Peter Adamson and Richard Taylor (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Arabic Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2005, pp. 370–405, p. 396. Beatrice H. Zedler, 'Introduction' in: *Averroes' Destructionum Philosophiae Algazelis in the Latin version of Calo Calonymos*, edited by Beatrice Zedler, Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press 1961, pp. 1–65.

[49] Tenneman, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Bd. 8, p. 404.

[50] Montgomery Watt and Marmura, Der Islam, II, pp. 408 ff.

all causal relations in our finite world. Therefore, he denied the reality, the (semi) autonomy of secondary causes. Al Ghazali's position became dominant, 'orthodox' so to speak, in Islamic thinking at the costs of the Aristotelians. After al Ghazali came Averroes who attacked him again. He was the last great representative of the Aristotelian mediaeval tradition. As a special, isolated thinker, not known by Hegel and Tennemann, one has to mention Ibn Khaldum 1332–1406, a social philosopher and philosopher of history.

Often it is said that al Ghazali dealt a definite blow to the development of Islamic philosophy, that because of him Islamic philosophy did not survive the Middle Ages. To say that after al Ghazali Islamic philosophy ended, is exaggerated. But it is true that, because it lost its Aristotelian combination with the sciences, it could not make the transition to the modern sciences and continued its existence in combination with theology and especially mysticism. Not Aristotelism, but Neo-Platonism in combination with mysticism became dominant, which provokes sometimes the question of it being still philosophy.

Therefore, Hegel had a point, in as far as al Ghazali's position, stressing the omnipotence of God at the cost of the (semi) autonomy of the world, became dominant in Islam,[51] Hegel rightly highlighted the position of the mutakallimun and described Islam properly as a religion of the Sublime. Combining these ideas with Persian mysticism as he knew it from Tholucks' work, was not wrong either. There is indeed familiarity between them.[52]

However, this stressing of the omnipotence was not the point of the philosophers, so much as of theologians in discussion with the philosophers. This Islamic view on the unsustainability of all natural laws is a well-known topic in catholic circles that always opposed it to Aquinas' idea of the semi-autonomous reality of secondary causes. This 'rationalism' of catholicism was the background of the famous or notorious speech of Pope Benedict XVI in Regensburg in 2006, in which he criticized this Islamic worldview because of its irrationality.

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[51] And one should not exaggerate al—Ghazali's voluntarism. Generally, in his thought Gods wisdom prevails over his omnipotency. See William J. Courtnay, 'The Critique on Natural Causality in the Mutakallimun and Nominalism' in William J. Cournay, *Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought*, London: Variorum Reprints 1984, pp. 77–94.

[52] Therefore a special chapter about Persian poets in his book about al Ghazali in: Bernard Carra de Vaux, *Ghazali A.H. 450505/1058–111* (*Algazel*) Amsterdam: Philo Press 1974 (first edition 1902) p. 273.

In modern times, however, the dominant position of al Ghazali is discussed again. Modern thinkers try to open the course of the history of Islamic philosophy again by re-opening the debate between Avicenna, al-Ghazali and Averroes, especially regarding problems of nature, natural sciences and with regard to natural law as the source of human rights.[53] So Islamic philosophy is certainly not at its end. Just like it tried to cope with Greek thought in the past, it tries now to digest modern Western thinking.

10. Islam in the Lectures on Fine Art

Islamic art is dealt with in the part about oriental art. This type of art is called symbolic art. Islamic art belongs to the 'Symbolism of the Sublime', which is the title of chapter II. In the first part of that chapter, section A is dedicated to the 'Pantheism of art', the second part is entitled: Art of the Sublime. Both parts belong to the 'Symbolism of the Sublime'. In Part A, Indian, Islamic and Christian mystical poetry are ranked together. Part B is as such dedicated to Judaism, to the Creator God, the world of the Old Testament and the Psalms. Hegel separates Judaism from pantheism. Pantheism is the affirmative mode of the religion of the Sublime. We find it in India, in mysticism of the Mohammedan Persian poets and again also in the deeper inwardness of thought and sentiment in the Christian West.[54] However, both Islamic and Judaic art belong to the 'Symbolism of the Sublime'. Because the Sublime transcends all sensual possibilities, Hegel concludes that pictorial art cannot exist in Judaism and Islam. So the art of the Sublime is essentially literature. Here we see the grave consequences of Kant's dictum that 'thou shalt make no images' was the most 'sublime' word of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Islamic pictural art exists in fact, non-figurative and figurative. The prohibition does not mean that man should not try to paint an image of God, but first of all that man should not try to imitate God as a creator. It focuses essentially on sculptures

[53] See: Al-Djabiri (Al-Jabri, Al-Gabiri), Muhammad 'Abid, *Arab-islamic philosophy, A Contemporary Critique*, Austin Texas: Middle East Monograph Series no. 12 1999. See also: Hendrich, Geert, *Islam und Aufklärung, Der Modernediskurs in der arabischen Philosophie*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2004. Kügelgen, Anke von, *Averroes und die arabische Moderne; Ansätze zu einer Neubegründung des Rationalismus im Islam*, Leiden 1994.

[54] G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics, Lectures on Fine Art*, I, II Translated by T. M. Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1998, Vol. I, p. 364.

of human beings and animals that because of their three-dimensionality resemble mostly normal creatures.[55] In paintings of humans and animals therefore, all plastical perspective has to be avoided.

The pantheistic mood of a human being is characterized as 'enlargement of the mind' and the Jewish sublime mood gives an 'elevation of the mind'. In Hebrew poetry, we encounter in the negative praise of God sublimity in the strict sense of the word. Hegel is criticizing this negativity that reduces the creation to an ornament.[56] But at the same time, Hegel highlights as special Jewish the fact that nature and the human being are for the first time just what they are, just nature and man as such bereft of God.

What Hegel is praising in Islamic pantheism is, to the contrary, the presence of God in the finite. So here, Judaism and Islam are separated, while both were intimately linked together in Hegel's description of the Islamic mind in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Moreover, in his *History of Philosophy* he blamed Islamic 'pantheistic' philosophy for the same thing he blames Judaism for in his Aesthetics.

Nevertheless, in the lectures on Aesthetics, the tone towards Islam is totally different. The positive attitude to Islam of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* comes back. The perspective on pantheism is in general positive. Moreover, this cannot be understood as just a matter of Hotho's way of text edition, for the position he defends here is identical with the position at the end of the Encyclopaedia. There too Hegel quotes Indian and Islamic mystical poetry together. Both are dealt with together positively within the context of a discussion about pantheism and the true (Christian) God. Spinoza's idea of God is the background of the discussion about pantheism. Therefore, Islam as a religion of 'substance' is distinguished from Christianity as a religion of 'subjectivity'. Judaism does not play any role there.[57]

Let us look first to Hegel's interpretation of pantheism and then to his specific estimation of Islamic 'pantheistic' poetry. For Hegel the word pantheism is, in essence, an impossible word. By the part 'pan', meaning 'all'

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[55] Doris Behrens-Abousef, *Beauty in Arabic Culture*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers 1999, pp. 109, 135. See also: Ettinghausen, Richard, 'The man-made setting, Islamic art and architecture', in: Bernard Lewis, *The world of Islam*, London: Thames and Hudson 1992, pp. 57–89, 62.

[56] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, p. 375.

[57] G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopaedie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, I, II, III, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1970, III, §572, pp. 378–393.

or 'everything', it suggests that 'everything is God', so, that 'this house', 'that book' and so on 'is God'. That is utterly nonsense. No philosopher and especially Spinoza ever represented that position.

However, when you take the 'Pan' as the 'totality' or the one substance in all individuals, it makes sense, but then there is nothing wrong with it. It says just that God is the perfection of everything in everything, the absolute being the truth, the goodness itself in all finite good individual things. So it says nothing more than that the finite is the finite from the infinite and vice versa.[58] As Hegel says in the Encyclopaedia, this pantheism is in fact monotheism.[59] Nevertheless, the difference is this that pantheism abstracts from particularity and individuality. All individual finite things are passing away for the absolute. Indian pantheism expresses this identity of the one and general substance, according to Hegel, in the words of Krishna in the Bhagavad—Gita, when Krishna is saying that among all existents he is always the most excellent: "Among the stars I am the shining sun (…), among the letters I am the vowel A, amongst seasons of the year the blossoming spring." etc. However, for Hegel's taste this kind of litany becomes monotonous and boring.[60] Nevertheless, in Islamic poetry pantheism has developed in a higher a more free subjective way. Hegel focuses especially on the work of the Persian poets Rumi (1207–1273) and Hafiz (Hafis) (1320–1389), indeed until now two very famous Muslim mystics, early translated and very influential in the West. Moreover, especially in this Muslim pantheism is an estimation of the finite world possible that is not possible in the art of the Sublime in the strict sense. For art of the Sublime, Judaism, the finite world is only an ornament of God.

Specifically in Islamic pantheistic poetry, the presence of God in the finite world is at the service of that world. Hegel's characterization of the pantheism of Islamic mysticism resembles surprisingly very much what he expects from Christianity: "In pantheism, on the other hand, the immanence of the divine in objects exalts mundane, natural and human existence itself into a more independent glory of its own."[61] Hegel mentions in this respect especially the poetry of Hafiz. Rumi is praised for the freedom of his feeling, transcending all petty interests, in which he still retains his substantial freedom and wins his self-identification with God. Hafiz is praised because he was able to ensoul objects like the rose, the

[58] Hegel, *Aesthetics*, p. 271.
[59] Idem, p. 385.
[60] Idem, p. 367.
[61] Idem, p. 368.

nightingale, the wine, the candle , the flame, which western poets handle in a more prosaic and ornamental way. Hegel opposes this 'objectivity' of feeling of the Persian poetry to Western poetry as more shut in upon itself and therefore subjective. However, he praises Goethe, for Goethe appropriated this Islamic attitude of feeling free in objectivity in his famous book the *West-Oestlicher Diwan*, in which he constructed an encounter between European and Islamic poetry by writing himself oriental poetry. At the end of his Lectures about Aesthetics Hegel praises this attitude of 'objective Humour' as the true attitude for modern poetry.[62] Hegel uses Islamic poetry as a critique of Western romantic poetry and promotes, by means of Islamic poetry, Goethe as the true poet of 'objective' humour, that is an attitude of being 'in 'things and at the same time being 'above' them. His own idea of 'divine' life as losing and winning yourself in finiteness he found back in Goethe's famous line 'Stirb und Werde' that is inspired by Islamic symbolism. In this way, Hegel thinks that Islamic poetry influences and contributes to Western developments.

In his comparison of Islam mysticism with Christian mysticism Hegel stresses the 'true' subjective character of Christian mysticism. Like oriental pantheism, it lives from the unity of the finite and the infinite, but it develops this pantheistic unity as a feeling of Gods presence in subjective consciousness. Hegel's example is Angel Silesius.[63] He expressed in wonderful mystical power of representation the substantial existence of God in things and the unification of the self with God and God with human subjectivity, while Eastern pantheism stresses more the absorption of the self in everything that is best and most splendid and emphasizes the self sacrifice of the subject in the contemplation of the one substance. Another Christian favourite is Meister Eckhart. (L1 24, 347–348/248)

This 'universal' mysticism comes back at the end of the Encyclopaedia in his self-defence against the attack of pantheism. Hegel again quotes the Bhagavad-Gita and, in extenso, his favourite, the 'excellent' Rumi. He refers to Tholuck, who in Hegel's view interpreted the pantheism of Persian poetry so well, but forgot all his understanding of religion when dealing with philosophy and theology.[64] Hegel has to have difficulties with Tholuck, for he criticized the idea of Trinity, Hegel's darling idea, as an idea with foreign non-Christian origins.[65] But Hegel takes Tholuck's

[62] Idem, p. 610.
[63] Idem, p. 371.
[64] Hegel, *Enzyklopaedie*, pp. 384–388.
[65] Hodgson, o.c. (see footnote 1), p. 62.

positive understanding of pantheistic Persian poetry as a means to defend his view on pantheism, religion and philosophy. For in Hegel's positive understanding of pantheism, pantheism means at least that there is a relation, an identity, not unqualified, between God and the world, the infinite and the finite, the One and the many. Hegel does not accept the definition of religion as the recognition of a God just as such, without any qualification, as can be found in all religions. It is very easy to unite all religions in this definition, because it does not say anything. For Hegel God is totally different from a highest being, because this is a being next and opposed to other beings and therefore not all beings encompassing God.[66] Pantheism gives a better clue to the unity of all religions and to the endeavour of philosophy: "The point of departure of all those (pantheistic) modes of representation and systems is the one and common need of all religions and philosophies of to make a representation of God and then of the relation between him and the world."[67] This relation is a differential identity relation. It is the quality of this relation, that is of identity and difference that determines the differences between the religions. In the pantheistic systems, the world seems to disappear in the infinite. So the deficiency of those systems is that they do not determine the one and common substance as subject and as 'Spirit'. Moreover, in Christian religion this determination is represented by the Trinity. Nevertheless, Hegel still prefers this unsatisfying pantheism above 'faith' (*Glaube*) and the abstract reflexivity of the Enlightenment. Therefore, for Hegel, that pantheistic mysticism, well understood, of India, Islam and Christianity is the expression of a common core business of all religion and philosophy.

Here we hear the heartbeat of Hegel's own philosophy and religiosity. He feels himself confirmed by mystical poetry. Of course he and we 'know' already that the relation of the infinite and the finite is the determining factor of religion, but now the mysticism of the world religions witnesses it.

11. Evaluation: Islamic Art and Pantheism

How real is this admiration for and how plausible is this interpretation of Islamic mysticism? Hegel was in the lucky circumstance that he had good sources. Tholuck and Von Hammer Purggstall were German and

[66] Hegel, *Enzyklopaedie*, pp. 381–382.
[67] Idem, p. 389.

Austrian pioneers in the field of Islamic religion, culture and politics. He used translations of the famous German poet Rückert, who still is considered to be a master translator, inside and outside Germany. Goethe's *West-oestlicher Divan* was a good source too. Normally Muslims do not like orientalising literature. However, for Goethe they make an exception. For some Muslims Goethe even was a crypto-Muslim. We saw already that Sir Mohammad Iqbal loved Goethe's representation of Islam. He loved Hegel's dynamic interpretation of Rumi too. The famous expert on Islamic mysticism, Annemarie Schimmel, does not hesitate to quote Goethe's *Diwan* in almost all her works as a true representation of the spirit of Islamic poetry.[68] Therefore, Hegel was in good company. The admiration is well founded.

It manifests the romantic strand in Hegel's thought. Goethe himself made the transition from classicism to romanticism in his *Diwan*, in his admiration for non-western and non-classicistic literature.

In addition, ever since Islamic poetry was discovered by German and English romantics, it belonged to the treasures of world literature and never failed to attract new readers. It was the favourite access to Islam for Christians. Especially the figure of Rumi is almost an icon of alternative religiosity in the West. Only the qualification of Islamic poetry as pantheism is old fashioned. Already Muslim reform thinkers like Iqbal protested against a pantheistic conception of Islam by Muslims themselves, because it stimulated fatalism. According to Louis Massignon, Islam and Islamic mysticism is essentially 'testimonial monism', the 'monism' of a lover testifying of his beloved: 'You are the only One'. Only with regard to the mystical thinker Ibn Arabi one sometimes still speaks of pantheism or of 'existential monism', but certainly not of Rumi, whose spiritual world is very testimonial, dynamic and personal as Hegel knew.[69]

But with the inadequate qualification of pantheism, he still could discover something typical of, for example, Hafiz' poetry. When Hegel stresses that his poetry is ensouling the whole world of finite things by God's presence, and gives them their own place, he reproduces in his own way a typical feature of that literature. In Hafiz you never know whether the poem is about God and mystical rapture or just about wine, drunkenness and the tavern. Still modern interpreters estimate the dictum of

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[68] Cf. Annemarie Schimmel, *As Through a Veil, Mystical Poetry in Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press 1982, pp. 49, 216 note 17.

[69] For a critical discussion see, Annemarie Schimmel, *The Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press 1975, p. 267.

Rückert that Hafiz always expresses by means of sensual realities a supersensible realm of being.[70] The question is of course whether this poetical technique of Hafiz has something to do with Hegel's idea of the (semi) autonomy of the finite world. Moreover, Hegel makes things complicated by using this poetry, mediated by Goethe, in a polemic with modern 'subjectivist' trends in German literature of his days. However, Hegel's analysis of the problem of pantheism, his stressing of the relational character of finiteness and infinity as such, is still of vital importance for the understanding of religion. Moreover, Hegel rightly uses mysticism as testimonial evidence.

Conclusion

What strikes us most in Hegel's dealing with Islam, is how modern already the religious world is his days was. The discussion about the fanatic character of Islam, or of all monotheism, is going on since then. The Hindu philosopher and first president of India, S. Radhakrishnan, writing in times of Muslim separatism and Christian missions, again praised the Greek and Romans and reproached Islam and Christianity for intolerance. At the same time, he tried to unite all religions by mysticism.[71] In modern times, the former president of Iran, Khatami, tried to find access to the western world by Sufism. Hegel's enthusiasm for Sufism and the Bhagavad-Gita elucidates the saying of the poet Heinrich Heine (1779–1856), that it was fashionable among German students of his time to learn Sanskrit and to read Hegel.[72] The romantic enthusiasm for mysticism, including Islamic Sufism, as the Internationale of all religion and philosophy, present in the bud in Hegel's thought, is a returning phenomenon in modern European history. It manifested itself again heavily between the two world wars and once more in the 'hippy' sixties of the twentieth century. Reincarnated in the 'sixties', Hegel himself could have been, for a while, a long-haired student-, striving for a better world, reading mystical texts and, God knows, smoking a joint. At the end, of course, Hegel criticized romanticism heavily and did not want to give in to its innate tendency to take refuge to another

[70] J. Ch. Bürgel, 'Einleitung', in: Muhammad Schams Ad-din Hafis, *Gedichte aus dem Diwan*, Ed. J. Ch. Bürgel, Stuttgart: Reclam 1972, pp. 3–31.

[71] S. Radhakrishnan, *A Hindu View of Life*, London: Allan and Unwinn 1964 (first edition 1927), pp. 37–40.

[72] Dierk Möller, 'Nachwort' in: Heinrich Heine, *Ideen, Das Buch Le Grand*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1972, pp. 75–96, 82.

world, to idealized oriental cultures or to the Greek and mediaeval past. Therefore, he went back to Christianity as the cultural source of his own place and time, the reality he wanted to understand. This of course does not justify his neglect of the Islam as a genuine religion in his Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion. Certainly not acceptable is his interpretation of Islam in function of Christian-European evolution. A good comparison of religion starts with the destruction of teleological schemes, as was done by Romantics like Herder and hermeneutical thinkers like Dilthey. Nevertheless, Hegel certainly was a romantic too and reaped the fruits of that movement. The positive emphatic understanding Hegel has of Islam, his genuine and appropriate admiration for Islamic mystical poetry is due to this romantic background. Hegel read all he could read about Islam and other religions in his days, but sciences, like 'history of religions', 'comparative sciences of religions', were not really developed at that time. From that point of view, it is amazing that Hegel could develop sometimes such a sympathetic understanding of Islam.

HEGEL AND PROTESTANTISM

Lu De Vos

1. Introduction

In the text 'Concerning an Accusation of Public Disparagement of the Catholic Religion' (*Über eine Anklage wegen öffentlicher Verunglimpfung der katholischen Religion*), Hegel claims to be born, to be educated and to live as a Lutheran, and to give courses at a Lutheran university.[1] Such a statement shows that Hegel remains a Lutheran Protestant, while also being a philosopher who claims to present truth *philosophically*. This leads to the question, what could be the philosophical value and thus the true rationality of Lutheran Protestantism as a specific form of Christian religion.[2] Is this denomination realy as prominent in Hegel's writings and courses, as it seems to be in his personal letters?[3] A simple observation, however, seems to contradict Hegel's Protestant claim: at least in his courses on the philosophy of religion (and what were a better place to show it?), Hegel focuses only on how the Lutheran confession gives the most insightful interpretation of the Christian Eucharist. Moreover, his interpretation of religion more generally seems eclectic and transconfessional.[4] Is Hegel fundamentally a Protestant; or is he first and foremost a speculative philosopher? Moreover, how are these two roles linked together?

Hegel was in fact born and educated in a Protestant family, followed the courses at the *Stift* in Tübingen to become a preacher, and gave lessons on religion at the Protestant *Gymnasium* in Nurnberg, a Protestant city in Catholic Bavaria. However, these biographical details do not sufficiently address the questions about the rationality and philosophical

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[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *Berliner Schriften*, *Werke* 11, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1970, pp. 68–70; this text is part of a defensive answer against an attack by a Roman-Catholic priest, following Hegel's courses given at the University of Berlin.

[2] Let us be *prudent* from the beginning: the notions of Protestantism (and of other Christian denominations) discussed here are only those of the beginning of the 19th century, not those of our—hopefully more ecumenical—time.

[3] See P. Jonkers, 'Hegel on Catholic Religion' (in this volume).

[4] P. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2005, p. 193.

importance of Protestantism as such. Even the claim (given only in E^2)[5] that religion and philosophy have the same content, is too vague to be helpful on this point.

To answer the question on the relative significance of Hegel's Protestantism and his philosophical presentation of it, I will focus on Hegel's later period (1827–1831), the period that follows immediately after the (either personal or strategic) confession quoted above.[6] Hegel's presentation of Christianity (even of its highest form—Protestantism) is too differentiated to summarize effectively in one paper.[7] The publications on which I will focus are the second and third versions of the *Encyclopaedia* (E^2 from 1827 & E^3 of 1830), some book-reviews from the *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (16: 17–310) and the Latin *Oratio* (*Speech for the Celebration of the Jubilee of the Confessio Augustana*, 1830; 16: 311–322). The most interesting and important texts for our purposes here will be the courses on the philosophy of religion from 1827 and 1831 (the latter of which is only extant in summaries),[8] and the further courses on the Proofs of the Existence of God (1829; 18: 215–218 & 228–336) and on history (1830/31, with a new introduction-manuscript, 18: 119–214) from this period.[9] Even as Hegel's work progresses further (it is visible in the

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[5] To be clear on the difference: *Encyclopedia* (1817) (further E1) gives no parallel claim, but stresses the beginning of philosophy (such as the *Science of Logic*), and only from the second Preface of the same book (1827), is there a difficult discussion with people of simple faith. The third Preface (1830), on the contrary, may be read as a full discussion with all those who cannot distinguish between religious forms 'of the catechism' and the task of philosophical thinking, a discussion, which has its origin in the criticisms of anonymous writers as well as of non-philosophers, refuted by Hegelian *Recensions*.

[6] The basis of this restriction is that Hegel (by 1827) seems to have elaborated a good deal of his philosophical problems. He is neither under academic pressure as he was when writing E1, nor under the stress of the competition with Schleiermacher as he was when composing his first course on religion (1821). Instead, he was at the pinnacle of his renown, but even then still under harsh criticism, just on the point of the Christianity of his philosophy (on the issue of his or Schelling's pantheism).

[7] Even the quote from the handbook, that religion could or should be the representation of absolute knowing is, as position within the framework of the *PhSp*, limited to that book or time. Moreover, even there it should be said, that it is not religion, but religious, speculative *knowledge* (9: 407), which is the first content containing aspect of absolute knowing.

[8] It would be very useful and interesting to find a new student notebook of the course on religion of 1831, to be certain of the changes in structure and content of the concept and of the elaboration of religion there.

[9] I'm quoting here in each case Hegel's writings from the *Gesammelte Werke* with Volume and page number (the Encyclopedia with E^2 or E^3 and §, if necessary also with A (=remarks)); the Courses (*Vorlesungen*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 1983 ff) are cited by V{olume} and page; the course on world-history, G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1830/31 -Heimann, Hrsg. Kl. Vieweg, München: Fink 2005 (quoted as Vie and page).

structure of the concept of religion as well as in the new introduction to the philosophy of history), he has reached such maturity that things are as clear as possible; and in fact there is a consistency in his philosophical view on Protestantism, that it renders Hegel's struggle with the reality of the different aspects of Protestantism coherent.[10]

Insofar as Lutheran Protestantism is a religious, Christian phenomenon, this paper will inquire into the program of the Hegelian philosophy of religion, in four stages. 1) It will determine the place of religion and Christianity within Hegel's general philosophical program. 2) It will argue that the Protestant or Lutheran form of Christianity is a more complex phenomenon than is expressed by its denominational particularity; it also has a special significance for world-history in general. 3) Thirdly, this paper will address some possible religious objections to Hegel's philosophical program or approach. 4) Finally, there will follow a short conclusion in which the main Hegelian thesis will reappear, that a philosophy (even of religion) cannot be sufficiently criticised by religious means alone.

2. Hegel's Program of a Philosophy of Religion

Hegel's philosophy of religion is not (Christian) theology. It is not apologetic. Its concern is not the metaphysical validity of a specific religion, nor is this its main topic. It is not a part (i.e. a 'handmaid') of the theological defence of a certain, Christian or Protestant form of religion.[11] It is not a philosophy that accepts the rational validity of Christian faith and religion. In this sense, it is not a generally Christian, nor specifically Lutheran philosophy, but rather simply philosophy. Hegel's speculative philosophy of religion is also not a simple description of what is,[12] it is not a presentation of how believers hope (and mostly claim dogmatically) that their

[10] For differences even within that view, one may refer to my *Die Grenze der Politik*, in: Hegel-Jahrbuch 2000, 236–245 and *Religion—Staat—Geschichte bei Hegel (1827–1831)*, in: A. Arndt u.a. (Hrsg.) *Staat und Religion* in *Hegels Rechtsphilosophie.* Berlin: Akademie Verlag 2009, 37–55.

[11] Such a form was often taken up by the obviously metaphysical (mostly Neo-Thomistic) theodicies in a catholic vein (until the sixties of the last century), where the existence of God could be proven by philosophical reason alone, and the specific religious form was that given by Christian religion.

[12] If philosophy is only a description, it is a needless duplication of actuality, insofar as it is the concern of all theoretical sciences to give an (understandable and reliable) description of actuality. A rational presentation has to give a more interesting version of actuality than simple (self-evident, phenomenal, and/or experience-based) description.

beliefs, as well as the objects of those beliefs, are in fact true and real. Hegel's philosophy of religion is a methodologically rational presentation of religion *as such* (not particularly Jewish, Islamic or Christian, etc.). In order to find and discover at least the possibility of reason in religion, reason must be present even in (Protestant) Christianity.

Reason is primarily and most importantly that which we all use in thinking and acting, but moreover, it is that which indicates that an insight is knowable for everyone, and able to be judged on just such justifiable grounds. For a critical philosopher (after Kant or Fichte), rationality in this sense must be the object of its own thematic inquiry, and such an inquiry is the central task of philosophy, called 'logic' by Kant and Hegel (or 'science of knowledge' by Fichte). This basic point already sets apart every simple argument of a normal (i.e. non-philosophical) kind, which include religious arguments, and which presuppose, and never question, the content of rationality itself. Such an inquiry, the special task of philosophy, is thus neither Christian, nor Catholic, nor Protestant, but rather necessarily and simply rational. Hegel's philosophy is in this way critical of every normal (positivist, religious, and/or merely descriptive) understanding, insofar as such an understanding claims to be philosophical in an immediate sense. Only if a content can be said to be rational (that is, can be addressed in and through in critical terms), can it be said to be philosophical. Therefore, according to Hegel, even the topic 'God' is no longer available to philosophy in a strict sense, as the (traditional, metaphysical) topic of a natural theology, insofar as Hegel accepts the fundamental critique of Kant against any substrate that could be considered independent of rational thinking.[13] If such a religious and purely theological topic is to have any coherence, it may appear only *within* a philosophy of that reality, that is, within a philosophy of *religion*.

Hegel's philosophy of religion, at the same time, opposes the reduction by the Enlightenment, which claims that religion lacks any validity (of its own), that only positive knowledge of sensible things of the visible and measurable world is knowledge properly speaking, and that the notion of 'God' is either ideologically false (i.e. atheism) or is an empty metaphysi-

[13] See my 'L'ontologie problématique dans la philosophie allemande classique', in: E. Gaziaux (éd.), *Philosophie et Theologie*, Leuven, 2007, 61–84; see also H. F. Fulda, 'Die Ontologie und ihr Schicksal' in: *Hegel, Critique de Kant, Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 53, 1999, pp. 465–483. The theological description of its topics—God and Revelation—, is under critique only insofar as a theology pretents to speak also for those people, who do not participate in the same religious faith.

cal claim (i.e. deism) (V3, p. 356). This latter conclusion, however, is also accepted by Hegel, albeit on other grounds, in relation to metaphysics. That such a conclusion is not destructive to religion is just Hegel's point, insofar as religion can present the name of God and the matters, which are His domain, on their own terms, as living spirit. Neither was Hegel's goal a historical, exegetical one, following from the Enlightenment, in which the historical sources alone where the primary objects of inquiry, as in Schleiermacher (V3, pp. 356–7; V5, p. 300). That sort of inquiry, however, was not completely foreign to him, insofar as Hegel himself participated in the movement of the *Leben Jesu-Forschung* (in moral terms). More specifically, Hegel accepts the main difference between the 'Jesus' of historical biblical science on the one hand, and the communal or ecclesiastic (theological) 'Christ' on the other, which he posits after the controversy over Protestant orthodoxy with Reimarus and Lessing.[14]

Hegel's philosophy rejects supernaturalism, which accepts faith or positive revelation ('*Offenbarungsglaube*') as the origin of (even philosophical) knowledge. In fact, such supernaturalism is the position of faith, which regards itself (in its self-certainty) as an insight acceptable for everybody, even philosophically.[15] Furthermore, Hegel's philosophy has no confidence in the rationality of pietism, which holds that there may be no (reflected) knowledge of divine things, but only the inner awareness of the existence of God and divine events, for the pietist himself. Both of these positions are responses to the Enlightenment and are (specifically) religious positions, in which the notion of rational knowledge is neither justified by critical inquiry, nor open to everyone. Therefore, they are purely religious positions, certain of themselves, but not philosophical ones. In fact, Hegel will consider Enlightenment rationality and pietism as specifically (philosophically) 'problematic' positions. On the contrary, the position of faith as a religious (rather than philosophical) position is rejected or accepted as what it is in truth: simple faith. The Enlightenment is very critical or sceptical of the (misuses of) religion, but uses only the reflected criterion

[14] Hegel will not apply this strict division between Jesus and Christ in his texts, but insofar as he does not accept the Resurrection as an *historical* fact, but rather as a fact of the community of spirit, was the result of the controversy started by Lessing-Reimarus (*Fragmenten*-Streit), he is indebted to that movement. See also H. Gutschmidt, *Vernunfteinsicht und Glaube*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2007, p. 61.

[15] For Hegel, there is no specifically Christian philosophy at all. Philosophy is the wisdom of the world, where even an atheist must think in a valid way about the rationality of religion, at least as an important social and historical fact with its own truth-claims.

of reason (for Hegel, as understanding).[16] Pietism represents a simple form of religion, which is necessary, but not sufficient for religion to be grasped in its full sense.[17]

The rational presentation of religion (by philosophy), on the other hand, is a conceptual presentation; and in as far as conceptuality is the mark of philosophy, this presentation is a discourse on (conceptual) knowing, and not on things. In such a presentation, a 'given' phenomenon or domain (i.e. religion) is conceptually situated and determined within the framework of a conceptual approach to actuality: religion is neither reduced to a pre-given other domain (that of neuroscience or history e.g., as in the positivist approach), nor accepted without question, in a dogmatic or emotional way. Such a rational presentation does not reject other rational (domain-specific) presentations of specific religions (i.e. historical or theological ones), which present religion either not in religious terms or, on the other hand, as religion elucidated only for the faithful. These presentations are not the affair of reason as such, nor are they philosophical. However, theological presentations, in as far as there is no one true religion, are nevertheless systematic interlocutors. Hegel's presentation shows (or proves) to what extent theological entities and events should be interpreted as concepts, and thus be considered rationally valid. In this way, religion as such, and not any specific (even consummated) religion, is taken up within a philosophical framework that can be considered rational.[18]

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[16] For Hegel (as for Kant), there is a difference between understanding and reason; the understanding is the normal use of rationality, reason is the philosophical inquiry about the meaning of rationality in every sense (theoretical in sciences, practical, political, historical). Applied, the rationality used within a specific sphere of inquiry is that of a fixed ontology, whereas rationality as such is to be determined by philosophical logic or philosophy as such.

[17] Supernaturalism as a theology, which only claims in vain to be philosophical, was not a serious intellectual challenge to Hegel, although it attacked his position within the public sphere and annihilated his philosophy after Hegel's death with simple positions about immortality and God's personality.

[18] A philosophy of religion is a philosophical discipline of 'reality'. A philosophy of nature or history has to be based on physics in general (i.e. in the sense of 'the science of nature') or on the science of history. However, philosophy transforms the philosophical presuppositions of these constituted sciences (beings (*entia*) or events e.g.). In the same way, a philosophy of religion has to take seriously theologies as sciences of religion, but such a philosophy is no longer part of any theology, but rather treats all theology as providing it with conceptually insufficient data about religion for its philosophical elaboration. If this restriction were not accepted by theology, then such a theology would seem to present a positivistic version of religion (or to be supernaturalism).

3. Religion and Christianity

The development of a specific philosophy of religion (as a human activity) is (after Kant) a philosophical necessity, insofar as 'God' as an independent being can no longer be considered a valid topic of philosophical inquiry, as was the case in the metaphysical proofs of natural theology, in view of his status as the highest being.[19] *How* religion specifically fits into the framework of philosophy or how religion can deliver valid thoughts in philosophy, is subsequently the basic problem. Philosophy of religion remains a possibility. This is—evidently—not itself a theological problem, nor a problem for a philosophy that is only concerned with the potential intelligibility of dogmatically accepted faith.

Hegel's treatment of philosophy in the *Encyclopaedia* answers the fundamental question of the place of religion in philosophy: the whole sphere of absolute spirit is called 'religion'. This absolute spirit, however, is not a new 'entity', independent of knowing, but is rather 'only' a new self-conception of spirit. Within this sphere, a possible definition of the treatment of religious topics in a philosophical manner is also given.[20] The validity of religion seems restricted, insofar as its definition is concerned, to philosophical knowing, which does not claim a transcendent (non-conceptual) validity.[21] Religion itself is defined as the highest sphere of the whole philosophy of spirit, where spirit in its ultimate self-conception justifies or reflects the whole of philosophy. Moreover, spirit is not some thing, but a concept, which appears in different forms. These forms (individuals, states, the arts) are only forms of spirit, in as far as these forms constitute the minimal concept of spirit; through this constitution they construct a specific identity as a particular coming out of nature (E^3 §381). In this way, there are subjective spirits, who constitute singular individuals, since they claim in their natural individuality to be thinking and free forms. Moreover, there are objective spirits, which constitute their identity

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[19] See W. Jaeschke, *Die Vernunft in der Religion*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog 1986, pp. 18–133. For an (insufficient but very interesting) attempt to refute Kantian premises in order to give new proofs, see W. Cramer, *Das Absolute und das Kontingente*, Frankfurt a.M.: Klostermann 1959, 1976^2 and *Gottesbeweise und ihre Kritik*, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann 1967.

[20] See H.-F. Fulda, *Hegels Begriff des absoluten Geistes*, in *Hegel-Studien* 36, Berlin: 2001, pp. 171–198, who stresses that even an atheist should accept this proposed definition in search of a further justification.

[21] In E (with exclusion of the revealed religion), the term 'God' does not appear in the main text, as it is a *specifically religious* term. The Encyclopaedia, indeed, is a philosophical book, neither a religious or a theological treatise.

in taking together their own nature, the many of (individual) spirits, living on their territory.

Absolute spirit is, as will become clear, not an entity, but its own form (thinkable as a philosophical concept), in which, only by thinking such an absolute sphere, spirit can completely guarantee its own specificity, and show itself as the pure manifestation of freedom. In opposition to Enlightenment thought, Hegel asserts: if God is spirit, his concept is not empty (as was that of the God of natural theology), but he has fulfilled the minimal definitions and claims or requirements of the notion of spirit, in as far as only his spiritual form enables him to construct an intelligible identity as spirit.[22] Only within this presentation does Hegel's philosophy assume the task of natural philosophy to 'close' the system of philosophy. However, this task is not performed in the manner or method of theology, to guarantee independent beings, nor according to its content, concerned with the highest being.

This concept of religion is the elaboration of the introduction to 'absolute spirit' (E^3 §§553–555), and this encyclopaedic concept of religion (or, of absolute spirit) is proposed to be further determined by art, consummated religion, and philosophy. If this is really the case, then some problems arise, insofar as it is not immediately clear how this concept of absolute spirit can be the starting point of a philosophy of religion.[23] To begin a philosophy of religion, a sort of philosophy which seems to be presented independently, there is to be taken up out of religion a name 'God' (i.e. the term 'God'), that must constitute the specific difference, defined by the notion of spirit itself. Such a name is itself not the result of other parts of philosophy, but it has, as a new term (and thus, as representation), the mark of the real philosophy, a new and empty form (which, through philosophy, must be determined further).

Thus: (a) With this concept of religion, the conceptual necessity of a religious form is presented. (b) In such a philosophical presentation, it is

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[22] This program is dependent upon the speculative doctrine of the concept, which has to spell out its own (negatively discerned or in a sceptical way attacked) determinations, so that the result is, at the same time, the completed concept and the justification of its real specificity.

[23] The second problem, for those who are familiar with Hegel in a general way, is, why philosophy, and not the Christian religion, which is called the truth of religion, would be the ultimate result. A solution to this could be that the Christian religion is the truth of the concept of religion *as* religion. Philosophy, on the other hand, fulfils the concept of spirit adequately, insofar as it negates the form of representation, and presents the concept of spirit itself in its truth (and purity).

the rationality or—minimally—the universal recognition of the specifically Christian religion—as the truth of religion as such—which will be worked out thereafter.

a. *The Concept of Religion Proper*

In Hegel's elaboration of his philosophy of religion, the concept of religion is its specific starting point. It has three parts, the concept of God (not given in this form in the philosophy of absolute spirit), religious knowledge, and cult.

This elaborated concept begins from the (at this point, empty) term 'God' as with that which is specific to religious claims. 'God' is the name for a specific religious reality fulfilling the (initially abstract) definition of absolute spirit as the correspondence of real spirit with its concept. Without such a name, whether it is Zeus, JHWH or simply 'God', there is no recognisable religious dimension at all. On this introduction, two points can be made: 'God' is a name, so it is the initial approach of religion as such and, on the other hand, if religion is the highest form within spirit, God is also taken as the philosophical (or philosophically explainable) truth of the totality of spirit.[24]

'God' as the new, specifically religious term and, up to this point, as an unknown determination, must unfold through its elaboration or development in a conceptual, scientific way. At this point, there is only the thought of the empty concept 'God' as the specificity or the claimed truth of all infinitude. Only in as far as it can be elaborated within forms and institutions, which are the specifications for the use of such a concept (i.e. religions), can it be seen how and in what way it is rational. Only in this way is there a new content (i.e. religions), which works in and through history to explain the specific (ideal) spirituality of spirit, or, in as far as freedom has such a spiritual form, to be recognised by all

[24] With this definition, Hegel is not following the alternative that there is either a new philosophical theology (Jaeschke's position on the view of Hodgson) or a theo-anthropology (Feuerbach), given by Hodgson, (op. cit., 13). Religion is in fact not reducible to something less complex or less determined (say biology, psychology (Feuerbach), ethics (Kant), politics (Neo-Marxism), or history. But, its main concern does remain rationally empty as long as there is not a (religiously) attributable essence of spirit (i.e. the truth of spirit). Rationally, this essence could be interpreted as something other than spirit, but this is not a strange independent entity called 'God'. In fact, philosophy of religion replaces (*ersetzt*) the old philosophical theology, but is *neither* a new form of particular metaphysics, *nor* an aspect of speculative metaphysics proper.

spirit.[25] However, as the starting point (of a philosophy of religion), such a truth remains abstract. It claims nothing, with the exception that God is, and that he is one truth over and against all other truths that have been asserted and sublated before (like those of nature and finite spirit, which failed to bring themselves to completion). Even as absolute subsistence, 'God' is not concrete.[26] There is nothing in the name alone that the different names of god(s) can fulfil immediately, or that corresponds to the different names of god(s) (ghost(s), Re, Zeus, Jupiter, JHWH, God the Father, etc.). With a name alone, it may be a concept or a pure representation, but there is not yet religion.

Such a god becomes concrete only if he is the basis and moment of his development (as a concept), and the principle of his own (conceptual) particularisation.[27] There are two ways to attain such a particularisation: in the movement from either God to religious consciousness or from knowing to God. The first movement is attributed to him by religious people. The claim that God is the truth of all, is indeed a fact of religious consciousness, a claim that is related to the basic subsistent substance, using merely formal modes rationally, insofar as 'creation' by God and 'spiritualisation' from God are, in themselves, empty terms, if we attribute them without further determination to that truthful substance. Therefore, philosophy must determine how the religious knowledge asserted by some people could lead to an insight available to everyone, and furthermore also arrive at this insight in a philosophical way, insofar as He may be conceptually reconstructed. Specific to Hegel's treatment of religious knowledge is his survey of the *forms* of religious knowledge and his (even more specific) thesis that the proofs of God's existence show the elevation of the religious subject that is involved in the topic of religion itself.

This religious knowledge (according to the account given around 1820) demonstrates the elevation of itself to that truth. For a human being, the question is: how does his religious knowledge come to God? For

[25] Against all sceptics who could imagine that man could be the gods of the animals, animals can have perceptions and feelings, and there are kingdoms in the animal sphere, but art, religion or philosophy do not exist in the animal domain, insofar as we wouldn't accept that a dog could be a religious being (*Vorrede zu Hinrichs*, GW 15: 137).

[26] With such a notion, Hegel attributes to religion the claim that God is 'a se', not the philosophical but contradictory claim that he is '*causa sui*'.

[27] God is thus the example *par excellence* of the universal, or of the manner in which the universal can be represented. He may be determined by nature or by (finite) spirit, but until this point it can only be done in a negative way; only from this determination is he something, but, from now on, he is this determination as his own determination (if that may be seen in religions) by which he is himself or singular.

this elevation, there are a number of possibilities that are presented and accepted in religion as religious knowledge (mainly in Protestant circles) rationally.[28] Minimally, there is an immediate knowing or an immediate certainty that God is not only a name or merely a story I tell myself, but that he *is* and exists independently of me. At this starting point, the religious subject and God are linked, insofar as that subject is aware of the fact and claims that God is or that this content (God) is as spiritual as the subject is.[29] However, at this stage, this claim cannot be justified further.

At this point, the claim is as empty as when the name 'God' alone was asserted. However, it is now a claim of knowledge, not simply a proposal or empty definition. It will only authentically become a content of knowledge when it is justified by representation and thinking. As representation, it shows itself in sensuous figures, images, myths, narratives and histories, according to the content of different religions. Such representations of the acts of salvation are the beginning of religious education, but even with all these moments, the insight available for everybody (and thus justifiable), the place of religion is not defined in a precise way. This justified determination is a thinking in which the different moments are posited as conceptually necessary. In this thinking originates the different proofs of the existence of God. These proofs are neither the concern of merely immediate knowledge, nor of simple religious faith. They are, however, religious knowledge, considered (by philosophy) in its elevation of religious knowledge to God. The proofs, in this interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of religion, also give structure to the historical forms of religion, which do not restrict themselves to their (immediate) inwardness.[30]

In as far as the proofs are specific forms of elevation, Hegel is not returning to ontology, but is rather trying to justify forms of knowledge (of absolute spirit).[31] Such an interpretation of religion may be seen as

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[28] With this typology, Hegel has in mind all of the theological versions of Protestant religion of his time: Jacobi as a pietist, Schleiermacher as an enlightened theologian, and the simple faith of the people, all of which are insufficient forms for a properly philosophical approach to religion.

[29] Such an immediate knowledge was a common claim in pietistic and even cultivated Protestant circles around 1820–30. See Hegel's discussion of Göschel (16: 188–215) and the commentary of P. Jonkers, 'Unmittelbares Wissen und absolutes Wissen', in: W. Jaeschke & B. Sandkaulen, *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 2004, pp. 359–375.

[30] With this thesis, Hegel is not claiming that there is a temporal history of religions exposed in his philosophy of religion, but rather that there is a rational (and conceptually based) exposition of religions, which is recognisable in the history of religion.

[31] See G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Daseyn Gottes* (GW 18: 228–317). See also D. Murphy, *Gottesbeweis* in: P. Cobben e.o. (ed), *Hegel-Lexikon*, Darmstadt: WBG 2006, pp. 247–249.

'heterodox',[32] but is the result of the philosophical insight that the immediate (ontological) understanding of religion (in terms of separate entities, such as a God independent of the use of religious words, or immortal souls) is not rational. The proofs of the existence of God are the explication of religious consciousness and, in that sense, of religion itself. The most important of these proofs is the ontological one (Anselm, Descartes and Wolff), which is used only in Christian times. In this case, Hegel is addressing the Christian tradition in general, not a particularly Lutheran or particularly Protestant one, insofar as this proof is itself rational and not based on any particular faith alone. In this proof, as well as in Hegel's philosophy of religion generally, the being or the objectivity is indicated and justified in terms of the concept, for, only in the case of God, does its substance include his own being in himself. This philosophical exposition of the ontological proof is just the return to that concept that is posited at the beginning of the philosophy of religion.

Educated religious people exercise their religious identity and proper elevation through a particular system of religious worship (i.e. 'cult'), which gives them a real unity with 'God'. In the elevation of the proofs of God's existence, which presuppose a (metaphysical) concept, it remains unclear for the religious consciousness that it is *itself* that is elevating itself. At this level, however, religiously knowing consciousness remains within in its own representation, separated from its divine object. To overcome this represented separation or presupposed split is the purpose of ritual and ceremonial practices (i.e. cult). Cult thus provides the highest form of enjoyment to self-consciousness, in the way in which it reconciles that consciousness with the absolute. Participation in this (represented) reconciliation, which is (for the religious subject) fully and already performed by the divine act of salvation, is the basic activity of cult. This cult takes on a multiplicity of different forms; it is first of all devotion or contemplative prayer, which is active faith, or, in other words, it is engaged religious thinking, participating in God, so that the reconciliation is actual for him.

The particular forms of sacrifice, however, are secondly, from the point of view of the religious subject, essential. These forms are outer or external, but, from the point of view of the religious subject, essential. The external forms reproduce the reconciliation in little sacrifices and sacramental rites. In such practices, the religious subject is performing the

[32] See C. O'Regan, *The Heterodox Hegel*, Albany: SUNY Press 1994.

same elevation, but now for and with his own consciousness, so that the form of representation is destroyed. Such a ritual sacrifice is the negation and offering of some finite thing through which the subject demonstrates that he is enjoying ('*geniessend*') the unity of himself with his God.[33]

The most important and authentic form of sacrifice is the sacrifice of the heart, not only in the sense of the purification of desire and of particular passions, but also in the production of spirituality in the form of universality. The finitude or particularity of every subject has to elevate itself to its own purity, so that there is a universal law (of reconciliation), recognisable for everybody. This is the promotion of ethicity (*Sittlichkeit*) or the production of such an actuality that manifests the reconciliation in this world, but with which the consciousness of the truth remains religiously linked. Ethicity, then, does not involve simply the singular act of repentance, as it were merely a response to something bad, but it is a genuine form of reconciliation. Such a realisation of the annihilation of the particularity of the heart is not so much an extension of the cult as it is the true liberation of the freedom of the world to its own (spiritual) affair ('*Sache*'). Even better, it is not a particular grace, but everyone's actual striving toward real reconciliation! Such an account, that it is not the enjoyment of the external cult, but the purification of the heart, as the highest form of cult, may seem to be particularly Protestant in its inspiration (as will become clear in Hegel's presentation of Christianity). The true consciousness of the actual purification in ethicity seems to be insightful religion, or that it has become a practical insight available to everybody, or, in other words, that it has become philosophy. Religion depends upon this ethicity insofar as such an elevation (or purification) is linked with philosophy as the consciousness of truth, and also in as far as it is only out of this ethicity that God is no longer only a religious substance, but also interpreted as 'free spirit' (E^3 §552 A).

At this point, this internally elaborated concept could be an illusory or merely an internal philosophical concept (or a merely semantic definition) without validity, even with its allusion to real forms like sacraments and ethicity. To prove such forms have more than a merely illusory, internal, or semantic validity, they should be singularised for consciousness in real religion(s).

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[33] Hegel is describing all religious forms, in and through his own religious attitude, in terms of Christianity. However, the sense of this conceptual presentation is formal, valid for every religion.

b. *Revealed or Consummate Religion is Christianity*[34]

Hegel claims that the Christian religion fulfils, in historical actuality, the concept of religion, and is, as the result of the conceptual development of all other religions, therefore also true religion. In this rational form ('*Gestalt*'), the philosophical presentation of Christianity must be recognisable for everyone, including faithful or religious people. So, such a philosophical presentation must not be based only on a traditional view, or a view that is guaranteed by a religious authority or by the faithful, because a philosophical interpretation of Christianity is not a form of catechism (*Dritter Replik*, 16: 273). However, in such an interpretation, even religious people should not miss essential features of their faith (e.g. in Christianity, there must be attention to Jesus, who is their Christ) and this exposition should be a philosophical presentation of theological insights. In his summary, Hegel claims that the specifically essential aspects of Christianity are the Trinity (which was not taken to be theologically very essential during his time), the appearance of Jesus as Christ, the immortality of the soul and the state (when understood as the modern version of the Kingdom of God) (l.c., 16: 270).[35]

In as far as Christianity is the truth of the concept, as well as of other forms of religion, all marks of such religious conceptions are emphasised, and where the central preconceptions are Christian ones.[36] In this religion, the full realisation of such views is asserted, such as the Trinity (in the form of religious triplicity), the Incarnation (V5, 236, from W2) and the death of God (in Jesus). The differences in the views on immortality between pre-Christian and Christian religions are elaborated in the courses, in order to point to the essential meaning of Christianity.

Not presupposed, however, is the *concrete* concept of spirit. This concept is the idea of religion, specifying the concept of God, insofar as it

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[34] For a reliable English version: P. Hodgson, *Hegel and Christian Theology*, Oxford: Oxford UP 2005; the best philosophical books on Hegel's religion remain, however, W. Jaeschke, *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels*, Darmstadt: WBG 1983 and Jaeschke, *Die Vernunft*, (o.c.).

[35] This claim is very difficult, insofar as religious people (and religious authorities) seem to be unaware of their (particular) assumptions (e.g. the so-called transcendence or infinity or being as well as formulations from the Ecumenical Councils), but miss the point, that a philosophy should provide an insight into not just of the claimed truth of a particular religion, but of the truth of religion as such, which would apply even for atheists. For a different summary, see St. Rocker, *Hegel's Rational Religion*, Madison & London: Fairleigh Dickinson UP 1995, p. 189.

[36] For a discussion of other religions, see the rest of this book.

has returned in itself. In the consummate religion, God is in himself his own distinction. Only by grasping this distinction of the concept and this distinction as the self-distinction of God, is there a spiritual religion: with this self-distinction, God is Spirit. As spirit, He is not (only) substance, but spirit in its distinction; such a spirit is (minimally) spirit appearing for, or manifesting itself for spirit. In true religion, *Spirit* is the object of religion *and vice versa*; (absolute) spirit is so for spirit, and spirit is the form of appearing of Spirit. Revelation from God is the self-manifestation of spirit for spirit itself. With this interpretation or presentation, Hegel does not stress as much the specifically Christian character of religion, but discovers, in a religious form ('*Gestalt*'), his own determination of spirit. Spirit is the activity of the self-distinction of spirit. It manifests the particular moment(s) of its own essence or universality, through which it is never without existence (i.e. being-there or '*Daseyn*') (E^3 §383–384).[37] Absolute spirit is just the correspondence of the concept thereof with its own reality. Revelation is the form, which is given by spirit to itself; it is rational, insofar as we can also recognise ourselves in that form ('*Gestalt*') as rational.

This revelation, however, is, in the Christian religion, also *positive.* 'Positive' here means that there is an enduring object, or something present for consciousness itself. A positive side is necessary for revelatory religion, insofar as even religion must appear (for consciousness), and thus for representation, as spirit must be present for everybody (or, in as far as the content of 'a spirit' is taken up by them). As positive, however, the Bible contains the doctrine, which can be elaborated by specific churches as well as by theology, where the witness of spirit is known in scientific form. Even as spirit, the content or doctrine has its positiveness. Only in his concretion as activity, is God a living God, in the act of determining his own spiritual concept himself.

The content of religion, even in forms of representation, is also one of thinking, or truth.[38] Religion claims to have a truth over and above that of other religions (and against other forms of [finite] consciousness). Truth is present where spirit appears in religion as consciousness of its own spirit. Verification can only be the witness of spirit itself, in as far as it integrates or internalizes its own spirit, which appears in humans as reason or

[37] With such a presentation, Hegel determines the manifestation of spirit (as God) in terms of his own logic. 'God' is also thought to be a very specific singularisation of the concept (as idea).

[38] See for an (insufficient) truth discussion, insofar as Hegel seems again and again to be interpreted as a dogmatic rationalist: St. Rocher, *Hegel's Rational Religion*, pp. 137–162.

thinking. Thinking sublates the split between both sides of the same spirit in the proofs of God's existence (as spirit, or out of the concept). These proofs start from spirit, which is truth and, more specifically, absolute spirit, which lives through its own determination and from this determination, and is also observable in the conceptual determination(s) of earlier religions. In this way, it contains finite forms in determining itself as itself, which is its self-positing. Spirit has to contain (religious) finitude in itself in order to be real spirit. The point made by the ontological proof is important: only the concept attains liberation from positiveness and is real freedom or the essence of spirit for itself.[39] The transition, however, is to spirit itself, which exists as absolute subjectivity and as absolute personality. With its exposition as absolute spirit, spirit arrives at its definition as (authentic or true) spirit. Thus, spirit is spiritual in its positive appearance and presents spirit as absolute spirit; both are moments of its own actuality, which it manifests as spirit.

As in the concept of religion, the first moment (the abstract specificity) appears in a different form for religion (available for everybody, in representation). The *first* determination is God in his eternal essence, before the creation of the world, the inner Trinity of God, where, in his eternal essence through his son, he becomes spirit *only* for himself, at the level of God's persons loving one another. In this view, Hegel uses its own (theology-based) terminology: the immanent Trinity (as opposed to the 'economic' or revealed Trinity) does not mean immanent in the world, but immanent in God himself. The reference to the Trinity before Jesus' appearance on earth is in Hegel's view 'in itself', and thus not transcendent. If that which is 'in itself' is to be significant and not remain an empty concept, it must be 'fulfilled' or developed. Immanence used in this sense is not opposed to transcendence. What could be called transcendence is just Hegel's imma-

[39] Only when the traditional form of religious expression is taken as being the 'one true' form (as in supernaturalism), is philosophy considered to be hostile to religion, when it is critical of the 'self-evidence' or the presuppositions within traditional ways of speaking. Philosophy, however, is just the analysing all these truth claims, in such a way, that truth itself is its topic (of inquiry), which is not the case for physics (nature), nor for religion (God as Christ). Theology, on the other hand, most of the time provides just such a truth-inquiry to philosophy, and takes over such claims. In doing so, it comes to an *apory*: if God is the truth, then theology has the only object of truth, but in as far as truth also comes from other (discursive) forms of knowing, theology is dependent on just such a doctrine of truth-claims (like logic), in which there is no place (or no exclusive place) for God. If, on the other hand, a religion is only a particularity (one narrative among others), then it can have no further claim on universal recognisability and has destroyed its own claims on truth.

nence as '*Jenseits*' (or 'beyond'). The Trinity could be a '*Jenseits*', if it were not already related to our religious Christian knowledge, knowledge being the only possible topic of philosophy! In as far as an entity can be completed without being known (as is the case for every content containing knowledge that is not philosophical), theology and religious consciousness can claim, within their *own* form or domain (i.e. religion) that there is such independent, infinite thing.[40] However, insofar as this thinking claims to be true (in Hegel's sense), even the Trinity cannot remain on the other side of actuality. Truth requires the determination of its own concept. It must appear as (religiously knowable) spirit.[41]

The *second* moment is the creation of the Son as an earthly person,[42] through whom the oppositions between Heaven and Earth, God and man, good and bad, are instantiated. Really appearing and developing, God reveals himself in the suffering and death of the temporalised, eternal son, through which this son becomes spirit. To grasp this sensuous actuality as spiritual and religious actuality, finite spirit must intuit and remember the birth and death of the reconciler, so that finite spirit can identify itself with this reconciliation and the community may constitute the actual presence of spirit (for itself). In the death of the reconciler, which is, at the same time, the death of God as merely abstract or immanent (in itself) it is shown that man takes up the true religion, so that, through the reconciler, the eternal history of God has arisen into consciousness. In this way, God is the process of giving up his immanence to deliver himself to

[40] In itself or immanent (Trinity/Father) is only the opposite phenomenon (the 'economic' Trinity/son), but neither are explicated as concrete (Parousia/Spirit); that, at least, is Hegel's critical version of the Kantian argument. Only metaphysical (and not so much theological) statements stress the so-called transcendence of God. However, such a God is not a Trinitarian God!

[41] With this thesis, a Christian theologian could see a difficulty or danger; God 'should' be free not to manifest himself, but for Hegel such a freedom is empty, and is demonstrated to be empty, in as far as God has created, and has manifested himself. Even though the Trinity seems to indicate some conceptual moments, Hegel's logic is not God, (as seems to be Desmond's point, W. Desmond, *Hegel's God*, Aldershot: Ashgate 2003, p. 130), but rather all definitions of the (metaphysical) absolute are contained in the logic (H. F. Fulda, 'Spekulative Logik als die eigentliche Metaphysik', in: D. Pätzold & A. Vanderjagt, Hrsg.), *Hegels Transformation der Metaphysik*, Köln: Dinter 1991, pp. 9–27). Without their (own) speculative methodical generation, however, which is the very contribution of the theory or doctrine of rationality, Hegel's logic has also taken up (and replaced) the philosophical importance of what was the religious (and mistakenly metaphysical) concept of God. This is really the core of every (logical) concept, which is insofar as it is an objective concept; and God is—therefore—a concept, even the main example of the logical concept, that the idea is such a truth, is therefore also a logical exposition (*Darstellung*).

[42] Within a mythological representation, this is the first Adam.

the Resurrection in spirit. On this point, there are *no* differences between Christian denominations, in as far as the title of 'Son of God' is not interpreted in borrowed, metaphysical terms. Every Christian church accepts the basic form of Jesus as (the) Christ.

The *third* element of Hegel's concept of religion is the community, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It is the Kingdom of God, where God is spirit. This community includes all the people who have faith in the spiritual history of God, as well as those who elaborate the spiritual development of the kingdom of God, of which they are members. The community is existing spirit and is believed in by spirit in its concreteness and reality. The religious moments present just this transformation of every spirit that manifests itself in the Trinitarian way, the passing away from the senses of the singular subject, and the resurrection as universal spirit, by giving its testimony of truth. In the existent community, the doctrine of faith is grasped as valid truth. This truth of spirit is, in Christian religion, true *for all people*. Individual members are born into it through Baptism and are educated to its truth; the church teaches freedom and educates non-spiritual people to freedom. They receive absolution within the community of reconciliation and they enjoy the presence of God in the Eucharist. The process of the community is, furthermore, the whole divine process, in and through which the subject is spiritualised.

Hegel's Protestantism is apparent in his discussion of the sacraments. In both the courses of 1827 and 1831, he restricts the sacraments to just two, Baptism and the Eucharist. On forgiveness or absolution, the remark about the Catholic sacrament of Confession (1821, V5, 89) is left out; it may be open to discussion, which person can, as spirit, 'undo the past' ('*das Geschehene ungeschehen machen*').[43] Such an action is included within the church in the form of education (1821, V5, 260). In fact, such an act is visible as the real and legal power of the king.

More important, however, is Baptism, where the child learns that it will be educated toward the freedom of its own good actions, and in which it is confirmed that evil is subdued so that the subject can do good in such a reconciled world. The subsistence of the community is fully realised through participation in the Eucharist. Specifically for the philosophy of religion, the differences on the Eucharist are presented.[44] The Eucharist

[43] See my 'Das Geschehene ungeschehen machen', in: *Jahrbuch für Hegel-Forschung* 4/5, 2000, pp. 221–230.

[44] For M. Westphal (*Hegel and Protestantism*, in: R. Perkins (ed.), *History and System*, Albany, 1985, p. 82 as well for Jonkers (in this volume) the basic difference between Cathol-

(or Lord's Supper) is the participation in the resurrection of Christ by the religious subject. Here, Hegel stresses how Lutheranism accepts the *spiritual* transubstantiation in spirit and faith: God as Christ is present in acts of the eating and drinking themselves, not independently in the bread and wine (Catholicism) or only in memory (Calvinism). In this Communion, the individual, Christian subject enjoys ('*geniesst*') the presence of God.

However, in as far as it is only the Christian individual or the particular community who enjoys the reconciliation, this reconciliation is not yet actual. Such a community has a further task: it is insufficient to produce only an abstract reconciliation in opposition to the actuality proper. With the subject's purification to spirit, the grace of reconciliation for *all* men is discovered and may be realised in a free world. Such a grace is not in opposition to freedom, as was discussed in traditional Protestantism (1821, V5, 302), but it is the grace of freedom itself (V5: 262; 288). So it becomes clear: it is not the cult that is the realisation of community, but rather a universal ethicity in a free world that is the realisation *of the spirituality* of the community, and thus, of a spirituality available to everyone.[45] Ethical life, which is the form of universal law justifiable for everybody, is in fact the divestment by the Christian community of its particular form in view of the full realisation of spirit. It is a giving up, by the Christian community, of its own particularity, for the sake of the redemption of the world (i.e. of everyone). As such, this realisation is not the promotion of a particularly Protestant way of life or of a 'Protestant' state, but rather of a really free community, which is aware that the form of the community itself is itself rationally good. In this case, it is not holiness or (Catholic) sanctity, which is abstract and retired from the word, which is important, but rather the justification and sanctification of the rational ethical world. For Hegel, it is not celibacy, poverty, or the servitude to others (priests) that is holy, but rather marriage, work, and political freedom under the self-given law that are sanctified (E^3 §552 A).[46] In this way, true religiosity can appear

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icism and Protestantism is their respective understandings of Eucharist. This, however, is only an inner *theological* discussion. The point Hegel emphasises is not as such a theological one, but a basic concept, fully linked with Christianity, of the constitutive concept of freedom, where only the Protestants are not restoring spiritual servitude and make no fatal contradiction. This point is completely missed by M. Lilla, *Hegel and the Political Theology of* Reconciliation, in: *The Review of Metaphysics* 54, 2001, pp. 859–900; esp. 885 ff.

[45] See the review of the end of the four courses, St. Rocker, *Hegel's Rational Religion*, Madison & London, 1995, pp. 166–176.

[46] In German, Hegel can play with the words '*geistlich*' and '*geistig*', both rooted in spirit (*Geist*), (Vie, 191); The perversion in the Roman-Catholic church consists for Hegel in the

as true ethicity, in which the structures of an objective (and not subjective) world, that is reconciled as such or (minimally) in itself, are justified.[47] The modern secular world, based on Protestantism, substitutes (‘*ersetzt*’) the church as the spiritual realm in which reconciled spirit actualises itself.

In other words: in Hegel’s view on Protestantism, there are two clerical or confessional sacraments and there is the actual (sacrament of the) salvation of the world, in which *grace is visible and acts as freedom*, which is the task of *all* spirits, recognised as spirit, and not only of a particular confessional church.

The contribution of ‘religion’ to man is first and foremost that he be conscious of this gracious freedom of the world itself and to justify it (in Protestant religion or in philosophy). With this actualized reconciliation, to which consciousness has no opposition—as would be the case if there were another, separate holiness through which the actual justified world itself—the religious consciousness proposes itself in an ideal way as the consciousness of truth. This religious knowing that the subject is reconciled with God, has different forms; it may be ‘naive’, (and, for such critics, the church remains subsistent), but this knowing has become for itself also thinking (Enlightenment rationalism); in reaction against Enlightenment, religious knowing appears as immediate feeling (pietism V: 266) or even it remains in an unfree way within the claimed and confessed reconciliation (Catholicism V5: 267). None of these forms of knowing is aware in itself of what is actual. That is the task of philosophy. Philosophy as such (within the Protestant world) therefore *replaces* the form of cult. E^3 restates this: philosophy is the definite form of religious content; it is the religious content developed in the free manner of spirit as such (E^3 §552 A, and §573). There, philosophy posits this reconciliation as the peace of God which is not higher than all reason, but which is known by reason as the truth (V5, p. 269).

3. Protestantism is Lutheranism

Is the Lutheran or Protestant version of Christianity indeed important for Hegel’s philosophy, and if so, why? It is neither the Eucharist as

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replacement of ‘*geistig*’ with ‘*geistlich*’, in as far as all spiritual people (*geistig*) become servants of the clergy (*geistlich*).

[47] It is a sin against the Holy Spirit to deny the possibility of salvation or reconciliation (or the possibility of overcoming evil (besiegten Bösen (V5: 288). This is entailed in the assertion that there is evil as (radical) evil, as an entity or as an event, like Auschwitz.

participation or as prolepsis of the eschaton, where there is only a theological difference (which is the basic form of Lutheranism), nor the reduction of the content of Christianity to the Bible alone (*sola scriptura*) that is interesting to Hegel. Rather, what is important for Hegel is the purification of the singular heart (through education and action) in the ethical, free life of a spiritual community. Only this community may be seen as actual: just such an active Spirit for the salvation of all is, for Hegel, the philosophically significant discovery of Protestantism. Spirit is active in constituting what it is in itself (i.e. real love or real freedom), a spirit which lives through the community.

a. *Why Protestantism?*

Protestantism is characterised by a community of equally spiritual, free members, which is realised in and for salvation. This community is religious, consists of a church that teaches and has a cult. This church has no priests, no members of another status, but rather fully equal members. Thus, it demonstrates a real freedom, in which conscience is not bound again (and therefore in servitude) to any 'superiors' (E^3 §503A or *Grundlinien* §66A). While Hegel's Protestantism *seems* to be an anti-Catholic mentality, in taking up not-insightful, unequal exteriority as the distinguishing feature of Catholicism (in the Catholic Eucharist, in the difference between the holy priests and worldly layman, and in the prayers only performed by the priests, in the name of the other people, E^3 §552A), it is in fact a very reflective position, as we will see.

Hegel's philosophical view is not a cultivated Protestantism or a cultural Protestantism, but seems more inspired in its Protestantism by his anti-Catholic education (out of historical and familial motives),[48] and his personal aversion to the Catholic faith. On the other hand, his philosophy is not interested in a (particular) church, but in a non-confessional, non-denominational presentation of Christian religion. In this philosophical position, it is not the independence of a church in view of the Kingdom of God (nor of the priests, nor of the cultic practices done in a particular church) that is important, but rather the view that the salvation given in that Kingdom itself is stressed as actual. In as far as the form of a church is exclusively particular, the living spirit (and with spirit, it is also my spirit who is at the foreground) discovers and actualises the salvation of the

[48] See the contribution on Hegel's opposition to Catholicism by Peter Jonkers (in this volume).

world, which is reconciled in itself (i.e. the world has to bring about itself this form of reconciliation). Spirit is thus the spirit of the people itself; its substance and authority do not lie in some particular, external entity, but rather in the testimony that spirit is itself the autonomy of all people.

For Hegel, the point here is that, to an unfree particularisation of religion, there can only correspond a particularised (and exclusive, only external) freedom, in which the true universality of freedom (as children of God) is excluded. Insofar as it is learned and proclaimed by an hierarchy of specific (also particular) people, the priests, and is not spiritually performed by the people as a whole, and there is no universality.[49] Only if there is no particular class, one above another, can there be an emphasis on the sanctification of all in freedom. This Protestantism is Protestantism in the sense of spirit as living in a community, but not that of a singular spirit.[50] From this point, it follows that for the individual, only a Protestant conscience has no problem of a double consciousness, insofar as it can adopt communal laws as laws given by the authority of God, in as far as there is no other object or subject for these laws (E^3 §552 A). It is just this sort of merely atomistic individualism that will be promoted by Protestant liberalism of the United States. However, it remains for Hegel a real problem, how this liberal individualism can be linked with a rational state.[51]

What is not brought to the foreground, but must be added, is the self-destruction of Christian churches antagonistic to one another: if there are two churches, who each claim the same freedom and love, but who each deny of the freedom the other (See V3: 357–8, on the wars of religion), then the message itself has a fundamental problem. As far as the war of religions was devastating to persons and communities, it put an end to

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[49] This may be observed in, for example, church history after Vatican II. Where Vatican II defined the church as 'people of children of God' and 'service of the world', the hierarchy has (from John-Paul II on) since returned to the speaking about the church as the totality of specific clergymen.

[50] Insofar as Hegel stressing this kind of Protestantism, he is neither subjectivist, nor interpreting that as (moral or political) autonomy, nor conflating the two, as Westphal suggests, M. Westphal, *art.cit.*, p. 77. Cf. Also A. Shanks, *Hegel's Political Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP 1991, pp. 116–122. Hegel, on the contrary, has problems with the integration of American Protestantism and their liberal opinions (Vie, 59 ff.) For an account of Protestantism around 1800, see Fr. Schlegel, *Vom Charakter der Protestanten* (1804), in: Fr. Schlegel, *Schriften zur Kritischen Philosophie*, Hamburg: Meiner Verlag 2007, p. 181, where he stresses the audacity to have faith by autonomous thinking alone.

[51] With this thesis, the principle of subjectivism is not accepted, for, the subject must give up its particular aspects (its heart) in view of his universal, rule-governed custom. Autonomy, on the contrary, is accepted, insofar as the freedom of the spirit in all its forms has the structure of autonomy or has integrated it.

any absolute claims for the Christian message in relation to the community. Following these events, the freedom and reconciliation of all appear practicable (and sanctified) with thinking, where a rational ethicity is (more) recognised, neither by Luther nor by the Catholic Church (which returns to absolute and universal claims in respect to the concrete world), but in the evolution of some forms of 19th century Protestantism.

b. *How Protestant?*

Hegel is Lutheran insofar as he is a child of his time.[52] Therefore, he offers a very reflected Protestantism, that has learned to avoid the nonsensical (metaphysical) versions of (pre-enlightened) Christianity. If we now look at Lutheran Protestantism in relation to three common topics, the three '*sola*-principles' of Luther, we can try to discern how and in what way Hegel is reacting on them.

Does Hegel's philosophy accept '*sola fide*'? For Hegel, faith is necessary in relation to Christ's death and Resurrection, (V5: 284) to begin a religious Christian community. But faith is only one of the religious expressions and is one-sided, although Hegel also accepts devotion as a kind of practical faith. Hegel presents specific theological topics from Christian faith, such as the Trinity, the Son of Man, and spirit. Spirit is considered the basic notion of religion, as well as of the philosophical doctrine of religion. For, in the pietist Protestantism of his day, there is the minimal form of immediate knowledge, where God is given in consciousness as spirit. It is just this form that is interesting to Hegel, so that he can link that consciousness with philosophy, which justifies it.

Is there a philosophical understanding of '*sola scriptura*'? Hegel accepts the Bible as the basis of Christian faith and as a book of the people (in their own language). However, such a Biblical basis is not sufficient. Hegel is aware of the problems of reading the Bible and of translation, and exegetical, (rationalistic) ways of reading the text,[53] and that, in modern times, a lot of problems have arisen for which 'the letter' alone has no solution. Thus, only 'the spirit' could provide a solution, but it must be inspired spirit, and that inspiration is only certain by the witness of that spirit; and the highest witness is for him: philosophical thinking.

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[52] Insofar as he is not taking into account the Eastern churches (deliberately, in his manuscript V5: 89).

[53] Hegel is here alluding to the discussion between Lessing and Goeze, as well as to Schleiermacher.

Is there a philosophical justification of '*sola gratia*'? Hegel remarks in his courses[54] that there seems to be a theological opposition between grace and freedom. He himself, however, interprets the enjoyment ('*Genuss*'), that I am in the grace of God, or that his spirit is living in me, as the conscious union of reconciliation. It is just this reconciliation for all (not just for individuals or particular communities) that provides a conceptual solution to the problem. If everyone can use his own freedom (or spirit) to realise spirit, then grace is present for everybody. Perhaps here, this strange sort of philosophical interpretation is not bound to a particular church but is really aware of the Christian sense of salvation. It is in fact not the church that is the aim of the Christian message, but the salvation of the world (by Christ himself and not some church or another), sublated in spirit as such. For the sake of participation in this reconciliation, Hegel is interested in the sacrifice of the heart, not through a symbolic cultic act, but in reality, so that the subject attains an "absolute conviction" ('*Gesinnung*') (V5, p. 284), which is at the same time the Christian (Protestant) inspiration for (and the guarantee of) worldly institutions! Such a conviction instantiates the morally active subjectivity (of everybody), the result of the freedom of history, within ethical institutions, insofar as these are absolutely guaranteed by God. Such a conviction is not the same as Protestant-theological moralism, or the (felt) claim of absolute moral 'ought's' about families or states. Hegel's critique of such forms is the critique of a (in Hegel's view) sectarian (or traditionally understood) Protestantism (as the case of de Wette has shown). The same philosophical argument is valid against Catholicism: neither a church, nor theologians (as semi-priests) has the authority to render binding decisions (or to criticise in a sermon legally discussed decisions), for, in that case, they repeat the servitude of the laymen by prescribing what is valid for, and also the valid insight of, everybody!

Hegel's philosophical view of the Protestant position is thus not a traditional, 'naïve' (or felt) Lutheran view. Very specifically, and against common Protestant inspiration, it consists only of three main views. These topics are indeed taken from the Christian tradition, but are worked out in such a way that they are rationally understood (but not of course in the sense of simply being de-mythologized and reduced to preconceived

[54] In both courses, there are no further remarks about the teleologically difficult problem that the activity of grace could present difficulties in relation to freedom (V3: 249, 1824).

scientific results) and elevated to a rational core available to everybody, which is the task of philosophy itself.

First of all, *God as spirit* is a philosophical interpretation, although spirit is a topic common to both the theology of spirit and the philosophy of spirit. Spirit is not a simple topic, nor only one of faith (*fide*), but is instead linked with reason and knowledge in such a way that the empty, rationalistic (i.e. Enlightenment) result is avoided.[55] The move from 'God' to 'spirit' can be explained by Hegel's aversion to theology, in as far as it has borrowed determinations from metaphysical ontology without inquiring into their validity. If, on the contrary, spirit is really the topic of the Christian or Christian-inspired community, then—according to Hegel's argument—everybody can accept that content containing (absolute) spirit. Such a spirit is never a being that is fully independent of subjective and objective spirit, for, only in developing its notion, does spirit show how far it can take up the concept and thus being, in consciousness, also the full singularisation of its concept.

Secondly, although Hegel accepts the doctrine of *immortality* as a specifically Christian one, he gives a philosophical interpretation of it; immortality must be interpreted as (its) *own knowledge* and thus as eternal (V5, 227 or also 140). This knowledge accepts the right of the subject to perform its action with insight. That is, morality does not imply strange or universalistic (or even Christian) commands, but the subjective version of a freedom (of infinite value) in conformity with a common freedom. In this way, it would be possible (in principle) for everybody to accept this philosophical reconstruction. However, such an account or interpretation seems not to be in conformity with scripture, according to a fundamentalist reading of the Bible.

Thirdly, Hegel offers a very specific interpretation of 'grace': it is not specifically only grace for some (as in the doctrine of predestination), but rather a task (in or of freedom) *for everybody*, insofar as grace is the reconciliation performed in and through spirit. According to this doctrine, evil is (after Christ) reconciled (not only for particular religious people, but also for everybody). Evil is (according to Christianity) not an ontological

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[55] On this point, T. Guz makes a difficult statement; his overall thesis is that Hegel's logic and philosophy is *only* a development of Lutheran theology; but at least on one point he himself gives the counterexample: faith for Luther is not *ex ratione*, whereas Hegel accepts the rationality of every religion and of faith. See T. Guz, *Zum Gottesbegriff G.W.F. Hegels im Rückblick auf das Gottesverständnis Martin Luthers: eine metaphysische Untersuchung*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang 1998, p. 230, note 193!

category (that would be a return to Manichaeism or to the religion of the Pharisees)[56] (V5, 226–7), but a thought (linked with consciousness) and a moral one (with implications for ethicity—in the relation of the subjective part in ethical relations, or insofar as it may not concretise its duty in the right way). Evil is just a moral category, and indicates in its communal form a 'bad existence', that may happen to exist ('*Daseyn*'), as there are bad states (e.g. tyranny), bad religions (for Hegel, this includes the Roman Catholic version of Christianity), bad sciences (e.g. phrenology), (16: 261), but it does not have actuality ('*Wirklichkeit*') in a philosophical sense, insofar as a merely bad existence is an existence that will end at a certain moment without achieving its own purpose and without conceptual result.[57] The claim valid for everybody, however, is to realise the reconciliation, in as far as everybody presents him- or herself as spirit.[58] Even if this is contrary to specific (Protestant) doctrines of particular grace, it makes sense in terms of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation of, and salvation for *all* people of 'good willing', i.e. for all those who are acting in a really free way. In this interpretation, it is only the Protestant thematic principle of grace that enables, in its radical (philosophical) account, for everybody, the independence of the law of the community from specific Christian doctrine, so that there historically arises inner justice and ethicity of the state (see 18: 173).

c. *Protestantism is Not Only a Religious, but also an Historical Principle*[59]

Protestantism is not only a distinct theology, not only a doctrine of salvation in the development of cult, but it also has, as such a doctrine, an

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[56] Accordingly, no historical event is such a bad 'in itself'. The only event of such importance could be the crucifixion of Jesus out of which (*o felix culpa*) he has appeared for the community as Christ.

[57] Even the genocides of the 20th century (of Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, etc.) have had—too late—an end: the result is, at least in one case, a resurrection of common freedom.

[58] Even in history, there is no theodicy-problem of evil. Bad and evil events are not produced by a world spirit, but are produced by spirits, the sense of which is to be reconciled by considering, that—even with such elements—there may be a progression of freedom and of consciousness thereof. For a discussion of history as theodicy of freedom and *not* of God, see W. Hüffer, *Theodizee der Freiheit*. (Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 46), Hamburg: Bouvier Verlag 2002. That there is no notion of God who could be the object of protest for what humans themselves do in history, see W. Jaeschke, *Hegel-Handbuch*, Stuttgart & Weimar: J. B. Metzler 2003, pp. 412–414.

[59] See J. Dierken, *Hegels 'protestantisches Prinzip'*, in: *Hegels Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 38), Bonn: Bouvier Verlag 1998, pp. 123–146. For a composite view, see R. Gascoigne, *Religion, Rationality and Community*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers 1985, pp. 266–7.

historical principle out of cult (see specifically V3, 340 as well as V5, 269). With this specific insight into the structure of history in Christian times, we come to Hegel's most specific (later) insight, that the Protestant world is that world in which Christian freedom appears in actuality ('*Wirklichkeit*') for everybody, insofar as only therein is rational ethicity (which is attainable in principle for everyone) the realised, free goal of the development of Protestant Christianity, in opposition to the 'Catholic' non-realisation.

This claim in principle, on the political and historical differences between the Christian churches, is given by Hegel on the occasion of a festival in the *Oratio in Sacris Saecularibus tertiis Traditae Confessionis Augustanae* (*Speech for the Celebration of the Jubilee of the Confessio Augustana*, 1830).[60] This *Oratio* (speech) has a negative thesis: against Catholicism, Hegel posits that faith and doctrine are no longer the purview of a commission of scholars nor of a spiritual-clerical ('*geistliche*') authority. Furthermore, there is no need for a separate holiness, because it is just such a view on holiness that makes impossible any real reconciliation among Catholic states, either as ethicity or in their constitution.

The positive doctrine of the *Oratio* amounts to one main point. Religion is not merely a private affair, but rather, the (Christian) religion is the *womb of real freedom*.[61] Because Christian religion teaches freedom, there can be no possible separation of religion and state. Therefore, only some specific state can be with some corresponding religion. Religion and ethicity have the same character, which is also the case in the soul of the individual. This elaboration is seen in the philosophy of history: the (religious) spirit is the basis of all other forms; it is one individuality, whose essence can be represented as God, and venerated and enjoyed within religion. The German nations are educated in and through Christianity, being taught that man is free (18: 153). This acceptance of Christian religion is only the beginning, not the full realisation of freedom. There is a difference between the Christian principle (for all German nations) and the evolution thereof. Thus, history shows differences of level in the elaboration of freedom.

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[60] See J. Ritter, *Hegel und die Reformation* (1968), in: J. Ritter, *Metaphysik und Politik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1969, pp. 310–317 (first edition in: *Unbefangenes Christentum*, München, 1968, pp. 89–99).

[61] Freedom is not restricted to Christianity, but, for the first time in history, it is Christianity that learns that *everybody* (and not only a citizen, nor a specific person) is free.

Protestantism is the destruction of the obedience (to the clergy) of all free Christian people. Such servitude, within the form of *free* religion, contains its own contradiction. Crucial in Hegel's account are the events of the 16th century. The historical reaction to the 'Catholic' Middle Ages can be found in the position of the Lutheran or Evangelical doctrines. Karl V had been content, according to Hegel, with the pillage of Rome, and not achieving liberation from the Pope. In Augsburg, it was the Holy Spirit, which 'seized the moment' and went further in initiating a spiritual freedom, a step the emperor was not able to take. What is sacred ('*heilig*') is not strictly the purview of the priests (or the theologians), but is also given to laymen (16: 249). The so-called laymen have their own judgment and authority to speak about religion, which is confirmed by the testimony of spirit. Everybody performs and perfects his or her own relation to God in spirit, which is consciousness of reason, or of God himself. The state can become, through the will of God, an implicitly (in itself) independent, worldly, instantiated ethical form, which is the basis for the government of all justly governed states. The rights of the community as well as the ethical duties of all persons are in this way recognised by God.

If both government and church have the same inspiration, it is impossible for a government to have foreign, external (e.g. Catholic) influence. The principles of religion and state come together in the truth of all freedom. Man cannot have confidence in a law if he is not convinced that religion is not in contradiction with it, as is the case in Catholicism, where the rules of sanctity are proscribed by the Roman church. Family, property and freedom in the state are necessary prerequisites for a free community. In this sense, the Catholic religion does not give rise to the inner justice and ethicity of the state, which is present in the inwardness of the Protestant principle. Only the Reformation reveals the total divine and spiritual process in man; this free man exists as free insofar as he wills the true and lawfully ethical, and knows it as the universal.

After the Treaty of Westphalia, the Protestant principle, sanctified freedom, is taken up by Friedrich II, on the worldly side.[62] Such Protestantism is the basis and origin of the constitution of the state. In other words, without Christian reconciliation in the Protestant church (which sanctifies freedom), there is no authentic conviction of loyalty to the constitution of

[62] See E. Weisser-Lohmann, "Reformation" und "Friedrich II" in den geschichtsphilosophischen Vorlesungen Hegels, in: *Hegels Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte* (Hegel-Studien. Beiheft 38), Bonn, Bouvier Verlag 1998, pp. 95–121.

a state. While there is a good result in Prussia and other German nations (but not in Austria), this is only a partial reconciliation, as long as other countries are not reconciled in this manner. The remaining differences between them, the failures to renew the civil law in France, and the influence of Protestantism itself are at the foreground of Hegel's last course on history (Vie, 59 ff). Thus, there remain difficulties of content, within history! In North America, there was an atomistic, individualised liberal Protestantism, that—for Hegel—remained merely at the level of the market (i.e. civil society), and did not arrive at a real constitutional state. In South America, the negative influence of Catholicism was still dominant, so that in the known world of Hegel's time, the reconciliation of Protestantism is only fully realized in (constitutionally interpreted) Prussia (Vie, 240–1).

At this point, the state is reconciled with God and God with state. Civil freedom and justice are the fruits of this attained freedom in God, because religious and philosophical consciousness of the will of God are no longer distinct from consciousness of that which is true and lawful: an ethicity, which promotes and fulfils even the sensuous character of the body within its sublated form as free member of the community, in as far a he may marry and fulfil his economic necessities. For the human spirit, the knowledge of God is the origin or most certain principle of all ethical action. What cannot be deduced from God and is not sanctified by him, is not able to move in joyful obedience to the law.[63]

4. Philosophy of Religion or of History?

Is Hegel's philosophy, which combines rational interpretations of religion with views on history in order to conceive what is actual, criticisable as insufficiently religious or insufficiently Protestant, or is it criticisable as insufficiently philosophical?

In all texts cited here, Hegel claims to demonstrate the rationality of the definitive, consummate religion or to indicate that the historical Christian religion corresponds to the concept of what is rational (and not, importantly, the other way around). With Hegel's emphasis on spirit, his presentation of religion and Christian religion in particular, is made rationally, in the same sense in which he presents a rational view of history.

[63] This sanctification is not a *second* world of holiness (like 'in Catholicism'), but it is the final, not immediately arising, justification of what is done spiritually in ethicity (i.e. the consciousness of the truth), not a justification on a case-by-case basis.

His philosophy of religion (and also of history) is, first and foremost, philosophy. It is not dependent on the truth-claims of religion in general or any denomination in particular. His philosophy of religion exposes the form of conceptual knowledge about religion, in which religion (or absolute spirit) (and also history) is the *topic* (i.e. the content) of the discussion, not its premise. Such a Hegelian project is not dependent upon the theology of Christianity, nor does it wish to be. On the contrary, insofar as religion and Christianity have rationality, it is philosophy that can demonstrate the intelligibility in the historical evolution from religious community to its political, historical shape. For Hegel, the realisation of truth in spirit is performed, in its ultimate instance, by the concept. For the task of philosophy is to conceive the present, even a divided actuality, as an actuality, which only conceals its own reconciliation if people remain at the level of their own subjective (naïve) impression, but which may be understood as reconciled, if they try to conceive it as rational (and within the search of rationality).

How far can religion be transformed and yet still recognised by religious people? If the salvation of all is the goal, then every discussion about religion has to be conducted in a manner that is understandable for all. Hegel, at the very least, tries to formulate his claims in such a way. He presents the topics of Christian religion as such: God, creation, incarnation, death and resurrection in or as spirit. As with other topics presented in other philosophical disciplines, these topics are treated without (presupposed) metaphysical notions. In other words, these 'metaphysical concepts' are presented in their (negatively reformulated) speculative form. In this way, religion is not taken up as the final word, certainly not as theology or as the clergy would have it, but rather only as a (particular) religious claim. Even in criticizing and opposing such a philosophy of religion, the people and theologians can contribute to a more complex elaboration of what religion is for thinking, and for the thinking of thinking itself.

In the philosophically rational sense in which the philosophy of religion is presented, the philosophical topics are therefore actually the concept and the idea. Therein a number of specific problems has risen for a speculative philosophy of religion. In what sense is 'God' indeed the best example of the concept of the idea? In what sense does the logical-speculative concept indeed structure the Christian religion? Neither with logic as such, nor with specific parts, is a 'specific' relation or parallelism immediately given. Such questions are difficult exegetical and systematic problems, which could not be taken up in this treatment of Hegel's view

on Protestantism. However, answers to these questions are needed for a minimal understanding of the consistency of Hegel's actual philosophy of religion, and certainly for any *rational* critique of it.

Conclusion

Is it really necessary to ask, as most interpreters do, as a philosophical question, whether Hegel is a (good) Christian,[64] or, more specifically, an orthodox, or a heterodox one?[65] Philosophically speaking, the question would rather seem to be whether Hegel has sufficiently demonstrated the rationality and intelligibility of Protestant Christian religion, and its impact in history, insofar as this impact is not limited to aspects of (a given, subjective) faith.

Neither the atheistic claim that God is not elevated above of all the rest (God is indeed, for Hegel, the truth of nature and history), nor the irreligious claim that there is no spiritualisation of the world, are Hegel's fundamental positions. It is rather, the claim that God cannot be thought of as independent of every (religious) thought (in this formulation, it is clear that such a claim of independency is contradictory). This claim means there could not be a valuable ontology of religion anymore, since ontology is based on having *contents*, rather than being elaborated in *concepts*. Accordingly, for Hegel, God must be presented as spirit in religion as well as in philosophy.

The philosophical point, however, is the following: has Hegel sufficiently grounded the rational insight that Christianity, in its Protestant expression and in its historical evolution, is valid as a good, consummated *religion* of reconciled freedom? Moreover, has he shown for everybody (whether or not he or she is a philosopher) that such a religion has basically contributed, to the real, lived, historical *freedom of us all*?

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[64] J. Burbidge, 'Is Hegel a Christian?', in: J. Burbidge, *Hegel on Logic and Religion*, Albany: State University of New York Press 1992, pp. 141–153.

[65] See Hodgson, o.c., 100, who gives a catalogue of *theological* questions, as if either a theologian or anyone else could decide what orthodoxy is; nobody has '*Unfehlbarkeit*', with exception of the self-given claim of the Pope. For a Catholic discussion see H. Küng, *Unfehlbar? Eine Anfrage*, Zürich: Benziger Verlag 1998. Asking such questions (which takes over the role of the (Catholic) Holy See, or even of every Inquisition) seems to be the affair of God, who is—in the event that he would be interested in such questions—not Hegel's *rational* living spirit of community.

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